

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Part Two

24 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

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SOUTHLAND
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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

DAY 1**READ:** Genesis 27

The promises God gave Abraham were for his offspring, specifically Isaac, the promised heir. The promise of becoming a nation, the land of Canaan and the promise of a Messiah were all going to be fulfilled through Isaac. Isaac is now old, probably close to death (v. 2) and not properly seeing God's ways concerning his two sons. Remember how God spoke to Rebekah back in chapter 25 telling her that the older would serve the younger? Yet Isaac resolved to pass the promised blessing upon Esau, his eldest son (v. 4). He was doing things his own way instead of inquiring of the Lord and doing things God's way.

Rebekah knew what was going on (v. 5) and she knew that the blessing was intended for Jacob but she wronged Isaac by fooling him and she wronged Jacob by tempting him to do wrong by stealing the blessing deceitfully (v. 10). Her actions gave Esau reason to become hard-hearted towards his brother, mother, and father, and towards God. She was trying to accomplish God's will but she was doing it her own way.

Jacob got the blessing through deceitful means even though it was God's will for him to receive it. Jacob lied in three different ways. First by his words. He said, "I am Esau your firstborn" (v. 19). Second, by his actions in giving Isaac the food (v. 19). Finally, by his clothing – putting on Esau's garments (v. 15). He made use of every possible way of deceiving in order to accomplish his ends. Do we really need to act immorally in order to accomplish the purposes of God? I think not! These methods are not to be praised.

When Esau found out that Jacob had stolen the blessing he cried out with a bitter cry (v. 34). The one who took lightly his birthright is now begging to be blessed by his father. Isaac knew that Jacob deceitfully stole the blessing (v. 35). The blessing could not be revoked; Jacob would be lord over Esau (v. 37). Esau pleads to receive a blessing and he wept aloud (v. 38) but the only blessing he received was that of the sword and serving his brother. It is important to note that the descendants of Jacob generally had dominion over the descendants of Esau throughout history. The Edomites (Esau's line) were generally lower than the Israelites (Jacob's line). The Jews were never subjected to the Edomites and just as Jacob and Esau were eventually reconciled, the Jews and Edomites eventually became one people. Today the Edomites are totally extinct but the Jews still continue as a distinct people. All the Words of the Lord have been fulfilled regarding these two peoples.

Esau's response was becoming offended and holding a grudge against Jacob (v. 41) and he desired to kill his brother Jacob. Rebekah hears of Esau's plans and urges Jacob to flee to her brother Laban in Haran (v. 43). She pleaded with him to stay there until she gave word that it was safe to return (v. 45). The chapter concludes with Rebekah telling Isaac that she was disgusted with living because of Esau's wives and encourages Jacob to not marry a pagan woman but rather a relative (see Gen. 28:2). Basically, she is using deceitful means in order to encourage Isaac to encourage Jacob to leave; all the while her intent was to keep her son safe.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Isaac's favoritism of Esau caused him to disregard God's plans for his children. He knew from the Lord's prior prophecies that Jacob was the one in whom the covenant blessing would pass but he still intended to give the blessing to Esau. Many of us have clouded vision about ourselves, our children or even our spouse. Ask the Lord to reveal to you any strongholds that are keeping you from seeing things clearly. This could be pride, selfishness, lack of love, low self-esteem, unforgiveness, etc. Then pray, confessing these things to the Lord and asking Him to forgive you and show you

how to walk out your forgiveness.

2. Rebekah and Jacob's actions in this chapter were sinful and highly inexcusable. A mother teaches her favourite son to cheat and defraud his brother, deceive his father and tell lies! This shows a lack of trust in God's purposes. Jacob managed to maneuver things to get the birthright and the blessing but he did both by human means. It was God's divine plan to give both to him but he took matters into his own hands. Walking with God requires trusting not only His plans but His timing and His completing of those plans. We cannot run ahead and we cannot lag behind. Pray that God would strengthen and grow you in walking in His perfect timing for your life, according to His purposes. Pray that you would complete the steps that He is asking you to complete, according to His timing.
3. Jacob and Rebekah's manipulative, sinful ways damaged Esau. This sin had consequences and caused division in the family. Ask the Lord to show you a time when your actions hurt someone in your family, extended family or a friend. This could be even just a small thing like an unkind word or a judgmental statement. Ask the Lord for forgiveness and what steps He wants you to take to make amends.

DAY 2



READ: Genesis 28

This chapter starts off immediately from where the previous left off. Rebekah sees the need for Jacob to leave because of the anger of Esau, so she comes up with a plan. She suggests to Isaac that Jacob take a wife from her relatives. Isaac agrees that this is a good idea and sends Jacob to his mother's relatives to find a wife. Before Jacob leaves Isaac gives him the blessing of Abraham (v. 4). This time Jacob receives the blessing on purpose with his father fully knowing whom he was giving it to. When Esau heard that Jacob had gone to Paddan Aram to find a wife, he realized how displeasing it was that he had married pagan women. He saw how marrying a relative of Abraham was a better choice so he took another wife from the line of Ishmael. His intentions were good but he still hadn't figured out God's ways. Ishmael was not to inherit Abraham's promise. Esau was trying hard but it was too late and he still missed the mark. His offspring with this woman would not be part of the divine promise. He did all of this to desperately try to please his father, not to please the Lord.

On his way to Haran, Jacob had an interesting dream about a staircase reaching to heaven and angels ascending and descending on it (v. 12). Above the staircase was the Lord who spoke, passing on the blessing of Abraham to Jacob. God gave Jacob and his descendants the land which Jacob was lying on (v. 13). He promises to bless all nations through Jacob's offspring, a foreshadowing of the Messiah (v. 14). God then promises to be with Jacob, to watch over him and bring him back to this land. God will do what He says He will do (v. 15)! The primary purpose of this dream was to show the sovereignty of God by which he watches and regulates all things on earth and to confirm the covenant with Jacob.

When Jacob awoke he knew that something divine had happened. He took the stone that was his pillow and set it up as a pillar (v. 18) and called the place Bethel (v. 19). Then Jacob made a vow and acknowledged for the first time that the God of Abraham and Isaac was his God. The full acknowledgement would come only after his safe return from Haran. He also pledges to give God a tenth of all that God gives him.

God established a regular tithe in order to provide for those who devote their lives to ministry and therefore cannot provide for themselves in the marketplace. Being instituted by God Himself it can be seen as reasonable to devote a portion of our earthly goods to

those who give of their time, talents and strength to watch over, labour for and instruct people in spiritual things. Without the regular tithe of the people of the church how else is the church to pay its bills? The church should not have to beg for money - the people of the church should willingly give to the place where they are fed and where they experience godly fellowship.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Esau took a wife from the line of Ishmael in order to please his father, without inquiring of the Lord. It's easy to be hard on Esau but in reality, many people struggle with people pleasing. It is God we are to please, not man. Ask the Lord to show you a recent example of when you made a decision or a maybe even a comment in order to please someone rather than God. Dialogue with God about this. Ask Him to show you what motivates you to please people in this way? What is the root of this behaviour? Then pray through what He shows you.
2. The primary purpose of Jacob's dream was to show the sovereignty of God by which He watches and regulates all things on earth and to affirm the covenant with Jacob. God is in control! This is a good thing because we can trust Him, His love and His faithfulness. He brings His purposes to completion. All things are under God's rule and control and nothing happens without His direction or permission. Praise and thank God for these things. Ask Him to impress these truths deeper on your heart and to grow you in a firm resolve to trust and follow Him.
3. God meets with and reveals Himself to His followers. God is a relational God! We have so much to thank and praise Him for in this regard. Ask God to show you areas in your life where He has met and revealed Himself to you! Praise and thank Him for these things.

DAY 3



READ: Genesis 29

In this chapter Jacob arrives at his journey's destination and meets some shepherds at a well with three flocks of sheep. He asked the shepherds if they knew Laban (v. 5) and they reply that they did (v. 6) and that Rachel, Laban's daughter, was coming with the sheep. They dialog a bit about the logistics of watering and pasturing the sheep (v. 7-8) as Rachel comes up with her father's sheep (v. 9). Here we see a woman as a shepherdess! Jacob then helps to water Laban's sheep (v. 10) and then kisses Rachel and weeps (v. 11). He explains that he is her relative so she runs to tell her father (v. 12). Laban hurries to meet Jacob and embraces him and kisses him, bringing him home (v. 13).

After a month of staying with them, Laban suggests that Jacob receive pay for his work (v. 15). Laban obviously saw that Jacob was of great use to him and therefore wished to keep him around to work on his farm. Jacob agreed to work for Laban for seven years in return for Rachel's hand in marriage (v. 18). Rachel was the younger of Laban's two daughters; Leah was the oldest (v. 16). Laban agreed and Jacob served the seven years to get Rachel (v. 20). After the seven years had passed the day for the marriage arrived but Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah, the older sister (v. 23). The marriage feast lasted seven days (v. 27) and after that Laban would give Rachel to Jacob in exchange for another seven years of labour (v. 27). Jacob, the deceiver was now deceived! Jacob agreed and received Rachel as his wife (v. 28). It is clear that Jacob did not have to work another seven years before receiving Rachel but that he got Rachel and then worked the seven extra years. The giving

of the maidservants to Leah and Rachel were significant as they bore children to Jacob. Scripture is also clear that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (v. 30). Leah then conceived and bore four sons to Jacob – Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. Leah, although she was neglected by Jacob and despised by Rachel, had a great purpose in God's plan. The two greatest tribes of Israel came from Leah, not Rachel - Levi, the priestly tribe, and Judah, the royal tribe which would birth the Messiah. The uglier sister, who was neglected and despised, learned to look to the Lord and praise Him.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. During the month that Jacob spent with Laban he was busy making himself useful, so useful in fact that Laban desired to keep him around. It is good to use our time wisely and profitably as there is no room for laziness in the life of a Christian. Ask the Lord to show you how you are doing in the area of laziness. Are you diligent and productive? What are your biggest time wasters? Are you making excuses for not keeping up with the work that is your responsibility? What does the Lord want to say to you about these things today?
2. Laban's deception and manipulation of Jacob created years of discord between his two daughters. Rachel and Leah were in constant competition with each other. Leah received children and Rachel received Jacob's love and they were both jealous of each other. Jealousy is a terrible thing and can cause division in families and friendships. Ask the Lord to reveal to you any areas of your heart where you are jealous or envious of another. Then, confess these things as sin and ask for forgiveness.
3. *When the Lord saw Leah was unloved He opened her womb* (v. 31). Here we see God's compassion on Leah, which is touching. She was innocent in this mess and God ministered to her and met her needs. She had been scorned by her husband, who preferred Rachel. The naming of her fourth son, Judah was significant. His name means "praise". This shows how Leah had stopped naming her children to reflect the pain and longing in her heart, she now focused on God. She let God meet her needs and could now praise Him. She was driven to God by the neglect of her husband. Ask the Lord to show you how He meets your needs, even in the midst of your sorrow or troubles. Ask Him to show you His compassion towards you and what your role is in praising Him. Then, write out 8-10 things that you can praise God for in your life, things that are going on right now. Then praise Him for each one.

DAY 4



READ: Genesis 30

This chapter shows how the family of Jacob grew from four sons to eleven sons. It started with the envy of Rachel, which enticed her to offer her maidservant to Jacob, adding two sons to his clan - Dan and Naphtali. Rachel acted in the flesh and showed no reliance or dependence on God. She had the affection of her husband but still was not satisfied. She wanted what her sister had. Envy is rotten! Jacob realized that he could not give her what God has refused (v. 2). So Rachel used the pagan tradition of having a maidservant bear her children as maidservants were the property of the mistress and so were their children. Here we see that neither Jacob nor Rachel prayed for her to conceive rather they tried to fix things using their own methods. Rachel would have known that Jacob carried the promise given to Abraham and this gave her the chance of producing the promised seed. Leah then countered by also offering her maidservant to Jacob, who then bore two more sons, Gad and Asher.

This chapter includes an obscure reference to mandrakes that Reuben found in a field and brought home to his mother Leah. Rachel requested the mandrakes and Leah responded, "" (v. 15)? It seems that Rachel sold conjugal visit rights to Leah for some fruit. It seems these women had an intense desire to bear Jacob children – probably because of the hope of having a share in the blessing of Abraham by bringing forth Him in who all the nations of the earth were to be blessed. Then Leah had two more sons and a daughter - Issachar, Zebulun and Dinah.

After many years of waiting and wishing for her own child, finally Rachel conceived and delivered a son, Joseph. Had she finally learned to seek the Lord in prayer?

Having completed 14 years of faithful service, Jacob then decided to go back to his own country (v. 25). He had faithfully served his time with Laban and now had a large family to provide for. Jacob wanted to return to the land which God had promised him. He did not ask for anything other than his wives and children to take back to Canaan with him, showing his trust in God. Laban realized that the Lord blessed him because of Jacob (v. 26) and was reluctant to see Jacob return to his family in Canaan. He tried to entice Jacob to stay as the chief shepherd, this time with proper wages. They came up with a deal - Jacob would keep the speckled and spotted sheep and goats as wages for his continued work and Laban would get the rest. But Laban again tried to cheat Jacob by removing all the speckled and spotted sheep and goats which he gave to his own sons (v. 35). So, Jacob was cunning and manipulated the breeding process so that the speckled and spotted offspring became the stronger sheep and goats while Laban got the weaker flocks. Years earlier Jacob had arrived in Paddan-aram with nothing but his staff and now he was becoming quite rich (v. 43).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Leah was able to have children but Rachel was barren. This ultimately shows that it is God who creates human life. The idea of God's sovereignty over the womb is a persistent theme in the Bible. Spend some time thanking and praising God for His Sovereignty. He controls not only the good times but also the troubling circumstances in our lives!
2. Despite Rachel's great beauty she suffered despair. Leah wanted Rachel's beauty and love from Jacob and Rachel wanted Leah's ability to conceive. The problem was that both were not looking to God for His purpose for their lives, but were rather set on their own circumstances. Comparison is rotten, it breeds discontentment and offense. Ask the Lord to show you areas in your life where you struggle comparing yourself to others. Confess any areas of sin that He reveals to you and pray that you would learn to accept what God has for you and not to compare to others.
3. Rather than conscientiously tending the flocks of Laban while looking to God for the increase, Jacob decided that this was something he could handle best by resorting to his schemes and devices. Spend some prayer on this issue again for yourself. How are you doing in trusting God? How are you doing in inquiring of the Lord for His plans and obeying them? Dialogue with God about the things He has already showed you over the past few weeks.

DAY 5**READ:** Genesis 31

Jacob's increasing wealth became a problem in Laban's household (v. 1). Laban's sons were jealous of Jacob's prosperity, and even Laban started to look at Jacob differently (v. 2). So, God intervened and told Jacob to return to Canaan, promising to be with him (v. 3). Jacob then called his wives and explained his reasons for returning to Canaan, comparing their father Laban with the God of his father. Laban had cheated Jacob but God did not permit Laban to harm Jacob (v. 7). In this speech Jacob referred to a dream in which he had received guidance from the angel of God (v. 11). He continues describing how God commanded him to return to the land of his kindred (v. 13). God worked against Laban's schemes and Jacob now saw God's faithfulness to him.

Rachel and Leah responded favorably by describing how their father had disinherited them (v. 14-15) but that God had provided for them and their children (v. 16). These women knew and understood the true character of their father – his schemes had also caused them great pain.

Next we find Jacob packing everything he owned up and preparing to flee to Canaan without Laban knowing a thing (v. 20). As they were leaving Rachel secretly stole her father's household gods and Jacob made the most of his father-in-law's absence and left. When Laban found out what had happened, he gathered some men and pursued Jacob for seven days (v. 23). But God warned Laban to be careful what he said to Jacob (v. 24). When Laban caught up to Jacob he questioned why Jacob fled and mentioned that he would have sent them away with a party (v. 26-27). Laban wished that he could say goodbye to his grandchildren and explained how their secret departure was foolish and that he could harm Jacob because of this. He then describes how the Lord spoke to him, and asked about his household gods (v. 29-30). Jacob explained that he secretly escaped because he didn't think that Laban would let his daughters go (v. 31). Jacob then says that whoever stole the gods would not live, having no idea that his beloved Rachel stole them (v. 32).

Laban tried to find the gods but could not since Rachel hid them well and was now the deceiver (v. 33-35). Jacob then confronted Laban. For twenty years Laban had been controlling Jacob and now Jacob says something about it. Jacob had faithfully served Laban and had cared for Laban's herds with integrity and honesty. He had never taken advantage of Laban, even when he was mistreated (v. 36-41) and God had seen this and had rebuked Laban in the dream (v. 42).

In spite of their agreement in the past, Laban still claimed that everything that Jacob owned was actually his (v. 43). So he suggested that they make a covenant (v. 44) to protect the future of his daughters and to keep them from pursuing each other in the future (v. 51-52). This concluded the matter and the next morning Laban departed and returned home (v. 55).

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Throughout the last few chapters we see how Laban really was only looking out for himself – Laban's continual sin was covetousness. If he could benefit he really didn't seem to care who he wronged or who had to suffer. He wronged his daughters and his son-in-law in the process. Ask the Lord to show you any areas of covetousness that you struggle with. Do you struggle with coveting the possessions of others, their position, or beauty, or talents, or maybe their vacations, or houses, or the relationships that they have, etc. Confess as necessary and pray for the Lord to grow you in contentment.

2. In the twenty years that Jacob lived in Laban's household he learned many life lessons. He learned to trust and depend on God and was prepared to return home and live life as the promised heir. They were twenty tough years as there was deception, dishonesty, distrust, fear and jealousy. But through it all God kept his promises and brought Jacob back to the land of promise. Take a look at your life. Where can you see God working in the last five years? Ten years? Fifteen years? Twenty years? How is He transforming and growing you into a person that can be used of Him and for His purposes? Spend some time thanking Him for this.
3. Pray for the people in your life to grow in their relationship with God. Pray that you would be a good living example of being led by God and following Him. Pray that you would be quick to obey and listen to God, quick to inquire of the Lord and to follow through on what He shows you.

DAY 6



READ: Genesis 32

Jacob was on his way back to the land of his kin when he had another experience with God (v. 1-2). The story now shifts from the difficulties of leaving Laban to the difficulties of seeing Esau again. So, Jacob sent messengers before him to scope things out a bit and to see if he will find favor with his brother (v. 3-5). The messengers returned to Jacob and told him that Esau is coming with 400 men (v. 6). This yields fear in Jacob so he divided his people and possessions into two camps so that if one was destroyed the other could escape (v. 7-8). Jacob was not trusting the Lord, who had originally told him to return to Canaan. Jacob had assumed that Esau was coming with hostile intentions but in reality Esau was planning to honour his brother. Jacob then turned to the Lord in prayer and expressed his gratitude to God and his unworthiness of God's love and faithfulness (v. 10). He recognized that all he had was a gift from God. He then pleaded for deliverance from Esau and referred to the promise of being a great multitude (v. 12). Jacob was slowly starting to understand God's plans and purposes! Jacob then sent various droves of animals as gifts to his brother Esau (v. 13-21).

The next section of the chapter gives the account of an encounter between God and Jacob. His life was transformed by this encounter which included the changing of his name. Jacob sent his wives, their servants and his eleven children across the river, leaving him alone (v. 22-23). A man wrestled with Jacob until the breaking of the day (v. 24) and there is no doubt that this man is Jesus Christ. The wrestling was not just a physical exercise but a spiritual one. The man did not prevail against Jacob so He touched his hip socket and it was put out of joint (v. 25). The man then requested to be let go but Jacob would not let go unless he was blessed by this man (v. 26). The man then changed his name from Jacob to Israel signifying that Jacob had wrestled with God and had prevailed (v. 28). Jacob received a blessing from this man and called the place Peniel saying, "" (v. 30). This is why the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the bone socket (v. 32). This account is the climax of Jacob's life. All through his life he had been struggling with others and now he struggled with God. Through this he finally realized the importance of being blessed by God. The past events of his life had changed Jacob for the better as the God of his father had now become his God. It wasn't until after he had a severe struggle that he got his name, his heart and his character changed. He was no longer Jacob the deceiver but Israel – the man who prevailed with God.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Jacob reconciled with Laban and proceeded to Canaan – God was continually watching over his welfare. Here we see God’s omniscience – He knows, He remembers, He sees our trials and difficulties. Spend some time in thanksgiving prayer praising God for watching over you! Ask Him to show you 8-10 things that you can be thankful for today.
2. The thought of meeting Esau, whom Jacob had treated with unkindness and injustice, filled him with fear and helplessness. Sometimes as Christians we may feel this way but try to hide it, we don’t want anyone to think that there is something wrong with us. But, if we keep pretending that life is good and keep hiding our problems from God and others, then we won’t experience the freedom that we could have. Ask the Lord to show you a few things that you like to keep a secret from others. Is this something that you should be sharing with your table group and praying with them about? What does God want to say to you about becoming more vulnerable around others?
3. Jacob had an encounter with Jesus that transformed his life. We love and serve a living God who can transform lives! He can transform you, your spouse, your kids and even your biggest foe. Who do you need to pray for today? Take a moment to listen in prayer for this person; ask the Lord to show you how to pray for this person. Then pray those things for this person.

DAY 7



READ: Genesis 33

This chapter is the account of Jacob’s reconciliation with Esau. Jacob could see Esau coming with his four hundred men, so he arranged his wives and children in order of importance with Rachel and Joseph being given the preferred position (v. 1-2). Jacob then went out in front, approaching Esau in a submissive posture of bowing (v. 3). But Esau ran to meet him and embraced him with kisses and tears (v. 4). This showed that Esau held no animosity toward his brother, and that although Esau had also made mistakes in the past he had matured and was choosing to do the right thing. Esau was then introduced to Jacob’s children and wives (v. 5-7) and then questioned the presents that Jacob had sent to him (v. 8). Esau declined the gifts but Jacob insisted that he keep them. Jacob was making restitution for the wrongs that he had done to his brother and brought it all back to God’s gracious dealing with him. A remarkable parallel is made between God’s unmerited favour and Esau’s willingness to forgive (v. 10).

Esau suggested that they journey back together but Jacob refused using the weariness of his animals and children as his excuse (v. 12-14). It seems as though Jacob might not have trusted Esau entirely. Esau then offered to leave some of his men with Jacob but Jacob instead insists that God will take care of him (v. 15). So Esau returned to Seir and Jacob set up his household at Succoth (v. 17). Jacob then came safely to Shechem (in the land of Canaan) and bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent (v. 19) for a hundred pieces of money. He then built an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel (v. 20) signifying his commitment to worship the Lord.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. How sincere and genuine the conduct of Esau! He did not hold a grudge but rather received his brother, who had wronged him, with forgiveness and love. Ask the Lord to show you if you have any unforgiveness towards someone. This could be recent or from the past – ask God to reveal to you the root of the unforgiveness. Then confess this as sin and pray a blessing on the person who wronged you.
2. Jacob made restitution for the pain that he caused his brother Esau. Restitution means that you give back something that has been lost or stolen, it means that you make amends for the pain that you have caused someone or that you compensate for any damage done to a person. Ask the Lord to show you if there is anybody whom you need to make restitution to. What does this look like in your relationships? Commit to following through on what God shows you.
3. This chapter ends with Jacob building an altar signifying his commitment and worship to the Lord. God had been gracious with Jacob and did not give him what he deserved but rather reconciled him to his homeland and to his brother! God is good! Spend some time in worship of the Lord, praising Him for the good things that He has done for you. He is merciful! He is loving! He has shown kindness to you. Write out a prayer thanking Him for each of these things.

DAY 8



READ: Genesis 34

This chapter is quite disturbing as it includes a sinful incident that violates Jacob's daughter. Dinah, the daughter of Leah was raped by Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite. While the rape of Dinah was inexcusable, Simeon and Levi dished out a punishment that was also intolerable, although they felt they were justified in their action. The chapter begins by mentioning that Dinah went out to see the women of the land (v. 1). The scriptures tell us that Shechem seized Dinah and lay with her and humiliated her (v. 2). There was no consent on the part of Dinah as this was an act of violence and it seems as though she was kept there until her brothers set her free late in the chapter. Shechem now desired to make Dinah his wife (v. 4). So Hamor, Shechem's father, went to Jacob to discuss this possibility (v. 6). Jacob did not react but rather kept his wits about him (v. 5) however, Jacob's sons were indignant and very angry (v. 7). Hamor suggested that these peoples intermarry, dwell together and trade with each other (v. 10) and Shechem agreed to pay any dowry or gift that Jacob wishes (v. 12) so that he could marry Dinah. Jacob's sons reply deceitfully requesting that the men of their city all become circumcised (v. 14). Although it is correct for them to require circumcision in order for both groups to become one people, their intention was actually otherwise. It is sad to see how these brothers used a holy principle as a cloak for their deceitful and murderous purposes. This shows the depth of their wickedness. Hamor and Shechem are pleased by this and so they spoke to all the men of their city and told them that they could intermarry if they agreed to become circumcised (v. 22). So, they all became circumcised (v. 24). Hamor and Shechem were deceived by Jacob's sons who were ready to use the soreness of their circumcision to their own advantage. While they were recovering from the circumcision and unable to defend themselves, Simeon and Levi killed all the males in the city (v. 25) including Hamor and Shechem and they released Dinah from Shechem's house and went away (v. 27). The sons of Jacob plundered the city taking flocks, herds, donkeys and whatever was in the city and the field (v. 28) including their wealth, their children and their wives (v. 29). Jacob was enraged by what happened as he saw the consequences for his household, fearing

that the Canaanites and the Perizzites might attack (v. 30). Even still, Simeon and Levi felt justified in their actions (v. 31) and showed no signs of repentance. This chapter was included in the Bible to show the children of Israel why the promised Messiah would come from Jacob's fourth son, Judah, and not from his first three sons. The first three were all disqualified due to their sinful actions (see Gen. 49). We'll learn about how Reuben was disqualified from being the Messianic line in the next chapter.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. It was wicked of Shechem to be overcome with lust and to force himself on Dinah. No woman should experience this sort of violence against herself. This type of violation can have lasting effects on a person, yet the Lord can heal and restore even these wounds. Pray for the women in society who have been mistreated by men. Pray that they would find healing and restoration in the church and that they would be able to work through the terrible pain they have experienced and find freedom through Jesus.
2. It was corrupt of the sons of Jacob to slay the whole tribe for the offence of one man. These brothers thought that they were doing right, but they were being reactive and not acting with wisdom or discretion. Yes sin must be dealt with, but on God's terms, not through human vengeance. Ask the Lord to show you time where you took matters into your own hands and dealt with a wrong against you (or your kids) by hurting another. You probably didn't kill anybody but you may have spoken a harsh word or ignored someone or done something else. Repent of any desires that you have had to take revenge and repent of any times where you have taken revenge. Then ask the Lord to heal and restore the person who you wounded.
3. Verse 13 tells us that Jacob's sons replied deceitfully – like father, like son! As parents we need to break generational strongholds of sin in our lives so that they don't get passed down to our children. We do this by first acknowledging our sin and confessing it. The following are lists of things that can be generationally inherited:
 - General Health Predispositions - high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, cancer, etc.
 - Temperament - shyness, aggressiveness, anxiety, fear, etc.
 - Spiritual Weaknesses – attitudes or behaviors
 - Demonic Influences and Curses

Often the big issues that we deal with in our lives are generational, meaning that they have been problems for our parents, grandparents or even great-grandparents. These things often become problems for our children too. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any generational issues that are affecting you or your children (write them down in your journal, don't discard anything – even if it seems to be irrational or insignificant). Now go through each, one by one, confessing and breaking any generational tie that may exist. For bigger issues, commit to doing this regularly or commit to going to after service prayer.

DAY 9



READ: Genesis 35

Because of the actions of his sons it was no longer safe for Jacob to dwell where they were, so God graciously appeared to Jacob and told him what to do, commanding him to build an altar at Bethel (v. 1). Jacob then commanded all in his household to put away their idols and strange gods and to purify themselves (v. 2). Outward purification was

necessary before worship. So they listened and rid themselves of all forms of idols and Jacob disposed of them (v. 4). As they journeyed the terror of God was upon the cities that were around them, and they were not pursued (v. 5). Here we see a supernatural awe sent by the Lord showing His Divine protection. When they got to their destination Jacob built the altar and called the place El-bethel (v. 7). But Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died and was buried there beneath an oak. This was the nurse that was sent with Rebekah when Abraham's servant went to find a wife for Isaac. How she came to be in Jacob's family no one really knows. God then appeared to Jacob once again and reaffirmed his name change to Israel and confirmed to him the Abrahamic blessing which included becoming a nation, kings coming from him and receiving the land (v. 10-12). This was not a dream or vision but a real manifestation of Jesus. Jacob saw and heard from the future Saviour of the world! Jacob's response was to set up a pillar and offer God a drink offering to express his gratitude and devotion to God (v. 14) and he named this place Bethel. These verses show how the development of Jacob's relationship with God was approaching a climax as he had received several divine appearances. Jacob was now heir to the divine promises of God that were given to Abraham and then Isaac.

The family then continued on their journey but were disrupted by Rachel going into labour and giving birth to another son, Benjamin (v. 18). This was a hard labour that resulted in her death (v. 17) and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (Bethlehem) and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb (v. 19-20). We are then told of Reuben's sin as he lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine (v. 22). As a result of this adultery he lost the respect of his father and Gen. 49:4 tells us that this is also why, even though he was the firstborn, he would not have the greatness of the firstborn. The Messiah would not come from the line of Reuben because he forfeited his blessing due to his shocking behaviour with Bilhah. That is why this verse is included in the Scriptures.

The chapter concludes by summarizing Jacob's offspring which would become the 12 tribes of Israel (v. 23-26) and with the death of Isaac at the age of 180 (v. 28). Esau and Jacob buried their father (v. 29).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. After the conduct of Simeon and Levi at Shechem it is absolutely amazing that God protected them on their journey to Bethel. Safety and security is not found in our own strength or in alliances with others but in fear of God. We must trust the Sovereign God who is in control. Ask the Lord to press onto your heart a greater understanding of His Sovereignty and control. Ask Him to grow in you a deeper trust of Him.
2. In chapter 30:1 Rachel cries, *"give me children or else I die"* and in this chapter her desire was granted but the result was death. When we ask for things from God it must be with the deepest submission to His will as God alone knows what is best for us. How many prayers does God in mercy shut out! Ask the Lord to grow you in being submissive to His will, even if it means pain or suffering for you or a loved one. Pray that you would seek first His kingdom purposes over your own pleasure and comfort. Pray for a heart that is soft to Him and open to His will and plan for your life.
3. Reuben's sin, just like Simeon's and Levi's sins, robbed him of becoming the Messianic line. Yes, God forgives sins but there are consequences. Don't let sin rob you! Confess! Confession is a beautiful thing in that it leads to repentance and restoration. Ask the Lord to grow you in looking deep into your heart and confessing your sin freely to Him. Pray that the church would grow in deeper levels of confession and repentance which will lead to purity and righteousness.

DAY 10**READ:** Genesis 36

This chapter is largely genealogies showing the descendants of Esau. It is carefully written to precede the fuller and more important account of the descendants of Jacob. It starts with a bit of review – Esau took pagan wives and a wife from the daughters of Ishmael. These genealogies are included in Scripture to show how exactly God fulfilled the promises he made to him (see Gen. 25 & 27). Verse six leads us to believe that Esau and Jacob had dwelt together in Canaan. Here we see how Esau left this area because the land was unable to support both of them (v. 7). So, Esau settled in the hill country of Seir (v. 8). Esau had five sons and ten grandsons (v. 9-14). Esau's sons and grandsons produced 14 chief's (v. 15-19). Verses 20-30 list five chiefs associated with the Horites showing how Esau's descendants became the dominant force in this region. A number of kings emerge from the line of Esau (v. 31-39). The chapter concludes with listing a number of Edomite chiefs according to their clans and dwelling places (v. 40-43).

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. The Messiah could only come from one family, from one line, and God chose Jacob rather than Esau and Isaac rather than Ishmael. This does not mean that God did not value the others but rather that His purposes were different for the others. We must learn to accept God's plans and purposes for our lives and fulfill them. There is no room for grandiose thoughts of greatness, only submission to the will of God. There are no tasks too small; no act done for our God will go unnoticed or unrewarded. Even little things will all be greatly rewarded in eternity if they are done in obedience to God's plan and purpose for your life! Thank Him for giving significance to the things that may seem ordinary or mundane. Thank Him for bringing value to all areas of our lives. Thank Him for giving us purpose in life!
2. Genealogies are often seen as the boring parts of scripture but it is important to know that they are proofs of the prophecies of God that a Messiah would come from a particular family. Genealogies testify to the belief of the Jew that the Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. This chapter clearly shows that the Messiah did not come from Esau's line, just as God had prophesied. Thank God for the truth of His Word. Every word uttered from the Lord is true and will be fulfilled. Ask Him to give you a greater desire to study the prophecies in Scripture and pray for their fulfillment. Thank Him for being a God we can love and trust in all circumstances.
3. Esau was not the promised heir and he did have some moral failures while he was younger but we have no evidence that he ended his life living in wickedness. Rather, it seems that he forgave his brother Jacob and that they dwelled together in Canaan until the land couldn't support them both. Then we see Esau willingly leaving Canaan leaving his brother in the Promised Land showing submission to God's plan of giving the land to Jacob's descendants not his own. Esau finally realized that the promise was for his brother and not himself and he accepted it. This must have taken much humility and love of God! Many of us struggle with being happy for others when good things happen to them or if we think they are better off than us in some way (example: social status, wealth, beauty, position, talents, spiritual gifts, houses, vacations, spouses, children or even family relationships or friendships). As Christians we must stop comparing with each other and rather focus on our own walk with God and His plan for our lives. Ask the Lord to show you anyone who you struggle comparing yourself to. Then ask the Lord to help break this stronghold of comparison and to re-focus your eyes on Him and His plans for your life.

DAY 11**READ:** Genesis 37

Introduction to Genesis 37-50: The rest of the book of Genesis now shifts to Joseph with the theme still being the development of the future line of the Messiah. Although David and Jesus came from the line of Judah, royalty was initially ascribed to Joseph and was later passed on to his younger son Ephraim. Joseph was the immediate heir to the patriarchal promises and later became the governor of Egypt. Genesis also included the anticipation of when the priestly line would pass to the tribe of Judah (see Ps. 78:67-68). The accounts that conclude the book of Genesis explain how God's people ended up in the land of Egypt and how God was Sovereign in bringing about His purposes.

Genesis 37 begins the account of the generations of Jacob by starting with Joseph being sold into slavery. Joseph was the second youngest son of Jacob but was the first son of the wife that Jacob loved the most, Rachel. This caused him to be favoured by his father as he received special privileges normally given to the first-born. Verse 2 tells us that Joseph brought a bad report of his brothers to his father. Did this cause his brothers to increase in hatred of him? His father also gave him a coat of many colours which would have made him the envy of his brothers as this showed how his father favoured him. We have seen the effects of favouring one child over another in previous chapters and now we see how foolish this parental conduct is once again. Jealousy leads to hatred and animosity in Jacob's family as we see that Joseph's brothers could not speak peacefully to him (v. 4). To make matters worse, Joseph also received prophetic dreams, which bothered his brothers who could not accept that he would reign over them one day. Scripture is clear that the brothers knew exactly what those dreams meant and they hated him even more because of them (v. 5, 8). Maybe Joseph should have kept those dreams to himself?! His father rebuked him for the dream showing how he also understood that it meant that Joseph would rule over the entire family (v. 10).

In verse 12 Joseph's brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem (remember this city – the one where Dinah was raped and Simeon and Levi killed all the men in Gen. 34). Jacob sent Joseph to check up on his brothers (v. 14) and to bring back word. Maybe Jacob was worried about the possible vengeance of the neighbouring tribes for the sins his two sons had committed there years ago? Joseph found his brothers near Dothan (v. 17) and they were well. They saw Joseph from afar and conspired against him to kill him (v. 18). They mocked him, "" and ferociously determined to kill him (v. 19). But Reuben was thinking more sensibly so he suggested that they just leave him in the pit (Reuben was planning to rescue him out of the pit – v. 22). Maybe Reuben desired to regain his father's approval so that he could receive back the privileges of becoming the firstborn? Or, maybe Reuben was just acting mercifully? Either way, when Joseph arrived they stripped him of his colourful coat and threw him in the pit (v. 23-24). When they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites, Judah reasoned that they could profit by selling him to the Ishmaelites, and they would then be free from the guilt of murder (v. 26-27). The brothers agreed and sold him for twenty shekels of silver (v. 28). This was how Joseph landed up in Egypt. When Reuben found the pit empty he was filled with pain and anguish and questioned his brothers. Was his grief due to losing his brother or losing the chance to regain his father's approval? The brother's then deceived their father by dipping Joseph's robe in goat's blood and letting their father assume that a fierce animal devoured his son (v. 33). Oh the grief that Jacob must have experienced as he was the one who had sent Joseph out to the field and his death was his responsibility! Jacob refused to be comforted by his family as his most precious son was lost to him. Meanwhile, Joseph was sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard (v. 36).

NOTE: It is important to note that only nine of the brothers were involved in the selling of Joseph. Reuben was not present and neither was Benjamin who would have been home with his father as he was too young to be out in the fields.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Joseph received real, accurate prophetic dreams from the Lord. His downfall was that he opened his mouth and shared them with his brothers who already struggled with accepting him. He had zeal but he lacked wisdom. Sometimes God gives us something in listening prayer that is just for us to pray about and not to share with anyone. Sometimes we can actually do more damage by speaking up. Thank the Lord for speaking to us today! He is real and He gives prophetic insight through listening prayer. Pray that you would have the wisdom to know when to speak up about something God shows you and when to quietly pray about it.
2. Joseph received two accurate prophetic dreams from the Lord but they were not fulfilled until 22 years later! Sometimes we can get ahead of ourselves when we hear God speak to us. God may have given us an accurate word about something and then we rush to try to fulfill this word. Are we patient in waiting for God to fulfill the word? Are we willing to wait for His timing? This requires faithfulness, endurance and trust in God. Pray that you would grow in faithfulness, endurance and trusting in God. Pray that you would be given understanding and wisdom in properly applying the things that God shows you in listening prayer.
3. A house divided against itself cannot stand! Parents should be careful to treat each of their children respectfully and to not cause conflicts by exciting envy in some of their children through favouritism. Were you a victim of favouritism? Maybe by a parent or a teacher? Maybe you still feel that a parent or parent-in-law favours one child over another? Or maybe you feel that your parent or parent-in-law favours one grandchild over another? Ask the Lord to show you the condition of your heart in this area. Do you need to forgive someone? Tell God about your hurts and ask Him to remove them and to bring healing to your heart.

DAY 12



READ: Genesis 38

This chapter is shocking to say the least. In the middle of the account of Joseph we find a sexually graphic story about Judah and his sons which include spilled semen and prostitution. Yet this story fulfills an important role in the book of Genesis as it focuses on the continuation of the line of Judah showing the importance of this line. Later in Scripture kingship will be associated with the line of Judah as biblical history shows David comes from this line. Although this chapter shows the worst of Judah, it also shows how he was transformed. Later in Genesis we will see how he was redeemed.

The chapter begins with the birth of three sons to Judah by an unnamed Canaanite woman. The sons names were Er, Onan and Shelah (v. 3-5). Judah chose Tamar to be the wife of his eldest son Er but Er was wicked so the Lord put him to death (v. 7) leaving Tamar a childless widow. This meant that Judah's second son Onan needed to perform his duty and raise up offspring for his brother (v. 8). This custom is commonly known as "levirate marriage" which required the brother to marry the widow and give her children if she was childless (see Deut. 25:5-10). Judah was eager that Tamar should have a son to continue the firstborn line of Er. Onan knew that the child would be seen as Er's child and not his

own so he spilled his semen on the ground to keep her from getting pregnant (v. 9). God saw this as wicked and put Onan to death (v. 10) once again leaving Tamar childless. Judah then promised to give Tamar Shelah, the youngest son, when he was full grown. But Judah feared that Shelah would also die, so he was merely buying time and trying to get rid of Tamar (v. 11). But Tamar waited patiently for her promised child.

Next we find that Judah's wife, the mother of these three boys, died (v. 12) and Judah went to Timnath to shear sheep. Tamar learned of this and decided to do something about her childlessness. By this time she had realized that Judah had no intentions of giving Shelah to her as a husband (v. 14) so she was using her own resourcefulness to solve the problem of her childlessness. She removed her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil and sat at the entrance to Enaim which was on the road to Timnath (v. 14). When Judah saw her he thought she was a prostitute and they began to negotiate the terms for her hire not knowing that she was actually Tamar. Judah agreed to pay her a goat for her services but Tamar demanded the pledge of his seal, cord and staff, and he agreed (v. 18). Tamar knew that this man couldn't be trusted! So that was how Tamar became pregnant with Judah's baby (v. 18). She then returned to her widowhood (v. 19).

Judah desired to make good on his payment of the goat to the prostitute so he sent his friend who could not find her (20). After asking the men of the area they replied that no prostitute had been there (v. 21). Judah's friend returned to him and they decided to leave things be so they wouldn't be laughed at (v. 23). Judah didn't want people to know that he had been tricked out of his seal, cord and staff by a prostitute – how embarrassing!

About three months later, Judah heard that Tamar, his daughter-in-law, was pregnant (v. 24). Judah had ordered Tamar to live as a widow until Shelah was marrying age, showing that he considered her betrothed to Shelah; therefore Tamar's pregnancy would have been seen as adultery in those days. As the head of the family Judah could act in a judicial way, so he demanded that she be put to death for her crime (v. 24). Sounds like the pot is calling the kettle black! Tamar then sent the seal, cord and staff to Judah with the message that the owner of the items was the father of her baby (v. 25). Judah then identified the items and acknowledged that he had wronged Tamar by not giving Shelah to her (v. 26). This marks a clear turning point for Judah. Scripture is clear that they never "knew" each other again (v. 26).

Tamar gave birth to twin boys, Perez and Zerah. The birth was interesting in that one baby put out his hand and the midwife tied a scarlet thread on his hand (Zerah) but the other brother (Perez) actually was born first (v. 28-29). This leads us to believe that something significant will happen in the line of Perez. We know from the rest of Scripture that Christ came from the line of Perez (Matt. 1:3).

It is probable that Tamar's only motive in seducing Judah was her desire to have a child who might have been an heir in the promise made to Abraham. Judah did not keep his promise to give her Shelah, which was an injustice done to Tamar. It is hard to believe that Judah and Tamar were ancestors of the Messiah, but since they were, the birth of Perez and Zerah was recorded in Scripture.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Judah said that Tamar was more righteous than he (v. 26) but that does not mean that her acts were moral, only better than his. We must acknowledge that the sin of sexual immorality was committed here by both parties. This sin brought forth a child who would be in the line of the Messiah but it was not God's will for them to sin. They had a choice and they chose wrong. This shows us that God redeems and restores the repentant. Yet we must not remain or continue in our sin. Thank the Lord for forgiving

you! Thank Him for His mercy, compassion and love! Thank Him for empowering us to live righteously and for strengthening us so that we can turn from our sin and live holy lives through Jesus Christ!

2. Impurity is rampant in our society, especially sexual impurity. Yet sex and sexuality were created by God and are lovely and good in the context of marriage, a lifelong union between one man and one woman. Common forms of sexual impurity: TV, movies, coarse joking, pornography, same sex relationships, sexy novels, immodest dressing, adultery, fornication, voyeurism, lustful thoughts, masturbation, bestiality, mooning and many more sexual impurities. God calls us to guard our hearts against sexual impurity. We cannot allow even the smallest sinful thing into our minds and into our homes.
 - a. Ask the Lord to show you any areas where you have sexual impurity in your life even if it is in the smallest form. Don't make excuses; just write it down in your journal.
 - b. Pray a prayer of confession, confessing your sin and admitting that this is sin.
 - c. Thank the Lord for His forgiveness.
 - d. Ask the Lord to show you what you can do today in order to flee from sexual impurity. For example, what TV shows do you need to stop watching? What about movies? Or environments? Etc.
3. The purposes of God were to be realized in the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet it was the breakdown of the family which seriously threatened (from a human vantage point) the purposes of God. Today the same challenge faces the Christian family. Marriage and family is under attack. We live in a society that celebrates, flaunts and even promotes sexual sin. Today our families and our children are facing incredible pressure to conform to the world around us in this area. We must stand for purity and righteousness! Pray that the church would stand for God's standard of purity and righteousness. Pray that Christian marriages would be strengthened and healed in order to shine as lights to the world about the goodness of God and His ways. Pray for your marriage – listen in prayer and ask the Lord to show you one area where you can work on being a better spouse. Pray about what He shows you and commit to following through on it.

DAY 13

 **READ:** Genesis 39

The focus of Genesis now returns to Joseph as we find that the Lord was with him and he became successful (v. 2). His master Potiphar knew that it was because of God that Joseph was successful (v. 3) so Joseph became overseer of his entire household (v. 4) and was put in charge of all that he had. During this time the Lord blessed Potiphar's house for Joseph's sake (v. 5) and he had no concern about anything but the food he ate (v. 6). God never spoke directly to Joseph the way that he did to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but we can see God's providential care of Joseph in spite of having been sold into slavery. Joseph prospered due to God's presence with him. Joseph was handsome and Potiphar's wife was drawn to him (v. 7) indicating her desire to lie with him. But Joseph refused, knowing that this would be a great sin against his master and God (v. 9). She would not relent so he continued to refuse her and refused to even be with her (v. 10). One day, as Joseph was going about his work, Potiphar's wife grabbed his garment and he was unable to free himself. Joseph fled, leaving his garment in her hand. Once again we see that a garment of Joseph was used to deceive someone (remember the coat of many colours

which his brothers stained with blood?) She told a bold faced lie, convincing the men of her household that Joseph had seduced her and fled when she cried out (v. 14-15). Then she waited until her husband came home and then told him the whole deceitful story (v. 17-18). Scripture is clear that Joseph was completely innocent! The master got angry and put Joseph in prison (v. 20) but the Lord was with Joseph (v. 21) and the prison warden showed favor to Joseph. Once again Joseph was put in charge and given responsibilities (v. 23) because of God!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Joseph's purity in the midst of Potiphar's wife's sexual advances is exemplary. Joseph chose moral purity! Pray for the youth of today to choose the path of moral purity. Pray for an increase in purity in the church. Pray that Christians today would experience the freedom that comes from living according to God's laws. Pray that you and your family would model purity in all areas of your life.
2. Joseph's imprisonment may seem like a problem! Remember his dream – his brothers were to bow to him: how would this ever be accomplished now that he was in prison? Yet this captivity was part of God's plan to move Joseph to the position He has planned for him. We can't assume we know God's ways; we must trust Him and be prayerful about our life's circumstances. Is a tough circumstance that you are facing God's way of preparing you for the purpose He has for your life? Think about the tough times that you are facing – can you give thanks to God for them? Do you really believe that God can use any circumstance for His glory? Are you letting Him mold your character through the tough times? Ask Him about these things; pray about what He shows you.
3. Joseph fled sexual immorality and did not stand up and fight against Potiphar's wife. To know when to fight and when to flee are of great importance in the Christian life. Sometimes we are to actively resist and sometimes we are to escape. We must seek the Lord to know when to do what. Pray for the church to grow in wisdom in knowing when to flee and when to fight. Pray for a spirit of prayerfulness and listening to Jesus when you have interpersonal conflicts in your life. Pray that God would show you what He requires of you in each circumstance.

DAY 14



READ: Genesis 40

Two of Joseph's companions in prison were Pharaoh's chief cupbearer and his chief baker. For some reason Pharaoh was angry at these men and put them in prison (v. 2). Joseph was appointed to be over them and they were in prison together with Joseph for a while (v. 4). Both of these men had upsetting dreams on the same night so Joseph inquired about their misery (v. 7). These men realized that they had had prophetic dreams of great importance but that there was no one to interpret them. Joseph replied by saying, "Joseph was acknowledging that God alone can give the interpretation.

First, the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph. He had dreamt of a vine that had three branches. This vine had buds and blossoms and brought forth clusters of ripe grapes. Pharaoh's cup was in his hand and he pressed the grapes into the cup and gave it to Pharaoh to drink (v. 10-11). Joseph interpreted the dream for the chief cupbearer – the three branches were three days. In three days Pharaoh would restore the cupbearer to his former job (v. 12-13). Joseph then requested that he remember him and to get him out of prison, as Joseph claimed his innocence (v. 14-15).

Next, the chief baker had seen three baskets on his head in his dream and inside there were all sorts of baked foods for Pharaoh. But the birds came and ate out of the baskets (v. 16-17). Joseph then told the chief baker the interpretation of the dream. The three baskets represented that in three days Pharaoh would hang him from a tree and the birds would eat his flesh (v. 18-19).

The chapter concludes by telling us how both dreams were fulfilled according to Joseph's interpretations. On the third day Pharaoh made a feast for his servants and restored the cupbearer to his position and had the chief baker hanged (v. 30-22). Unfortunately, the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him (v. 23).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. In this chapter we find Joseph far away from his father's house where he was favoured. Where had his life of honesty and integrity gotten him? How would he continue to handle injustices and discouragement? God allowed Joseph to be tested, mistreated and forgotten. God was refining him and developing him into a godly man and leader that could be used to serve His purposes. In this chapter we see that Joseph had no negative attitudes towards God; in fact, he gives God the credit for the interpretation of the dreams showing how He trusts God. Yet Joseph was forgotten again, as the cupbearer did not remember him. Pray that God would grow you and the church in accepting and handling injustices with good character. Pray that believers would not get discouraged when they are mistreated. Pray that believers grow in trusting God through all circumstances.
2. God is looking for faith that will not be destroyed by circumstances. Even though we don't always understand, we know God's timing is always perfect. This chapter gives us a beautiful lesson on how to deal with despair and depression. Joseph had an absolute and unshakable confidence in God and that God was with him in his suffering. Freedom from pain and problems is not a sign of spiritual maturity – it's how we handle pain and problems that shows our spiritual maturity. God does not promise that believers will not suffer but rather He does promise to give a sufficient measure of His grace to endure it. What does God desire to say to you today about this? Ask Him to show you any wrong thoughts or feelings that you may have towards adversity.
3. God had given Joseph two prophetic dreams about his brothers bowing to him. This was Joseph's assurance that God would deliver him. Today many Christians go about with a wild optimism advocating the power of positive thinking. Is it better to think positively or think Biblically? Positive thinking tells us that we can control our circumstances if we just think right. Biblical thinking tells us to pursue Biblical goals and use Biblical means (such as prayer and listening prayer) and to be motivated by Biblical desires. We must put our confidence in God and not ourselves. God may not help us escape suffering but He will help us endure it! Ask the Lord to show you a difficulty that you are facing in your life. Then ask the Lord to show you how to think and act Biblically in this situation. Ask Him to help grow your faith, to help you endure and to grow your trust in Him through his circumstance.

DAY 15**READ:** Genesis 41

Joseph spent another two years in jail before the cupbearer remembered him and his was only remembered because Pharaoh had a dream that no one could interpret. Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile and seven cows that were attractive and plump came out of the Nile to feed in the reed grass. Then seven other cows that were ugly and thin came out after them and ate up the seven attractive cows (v. 1-4). This dream caused Pharaoh to awaken and upon falling asleep again he had a second dream where seven plump and good ears of grain were growing on one stalk and after them sprouted seven thin and blighted ears which swallowed up the seven plump ones (v. 5-7). Pharaoh awoke again and was troubled by the dreams. He called all the magicians of Egypt and all the wise men to interpret the dream but no one could do it (v. 8).

It was then when the cupbearer remembered Joseph and how he had accurately interpreted both his and the baker's dream (v. 9-13). This prompted Pharaoh to call Joseph to come before him in order to interpret the dream (v. 15). Joseph, once again, gave all credit for his dream interpretations to God (v. 16). Pharaoh then told his dream to Joseph and explained how no one could explain it to him (v. 17-24).

Joseph responded to Pharaoh with the interpretation of the dreams, which both had the same meaning. The seven good cows were seven good years and the seven ugly, lean cows were seven years of famine (v. 26-27). God was showing Pharaoh what He was about to do (v. 28). There would be seven years of great plenty throughout Egypt after which there will be seven years of famine (v. 29-30). The famine would be severe and consume the land (v. 31). The duplicity of the dreams (cows and grain) meant that this was fixed by God and would come about soon (v. 32). Joseph then told Pharaoh to get a discerning man to take one fifth of the produce of the land during the seven plentiful years and store up the grain and keep it to be used during the seven years of famine (v. 33-36).

Pharaoh was pleased with the proposal given by Joseph and saw the hand of God upon him (v. 37-38). Pharaoh saw that no one was as wise and discerning as Joseph (because of God) therefore he set Joseph as the ruler over his people as second in command in Egypt (v. 40). Pharaoh then gave Joseph his signet ring and fine clothes and put a gold chain around his neck (v. 42). Joseph was set over all the land of Egypt (v. 44). Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh and he faithfully gathered all the food and stored up great in abundance during the years of plenty (v. 46-49). During the years of plenty Joseph's wife bore him two sons – Manasseh and Ephraim (v. 50-52). When the famine spread over the land, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold the grain to the Egyptians (v. 56). The famine was so severe that people from all over the earth came to buy grain from Joseph (v. 57).

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Most of this chapter describes Pharaoh's dreams. It is clear that the cupbearer and baker as well as Pharaoh received dreams from God. Not all dreams are prophetic in nature but some are from God. Some dreams just serve to help our minds sort through the perplexities of our day but some dreams are from the Lord. Thank the Lord for the various ways He speaks to people. Thank Him for being a real, living God who interacts with humanity and who we can have a relationship with. Ask Him to grow you in hearing His voice more clearly and more accurately.
2. Joseph's slavery, Joseph's imprisonment, and Joseph's rise to second in command in Egypt all were part of God's plan and purpose for Joseph's life so that he could be used

as God's instrument to bring Jacob's family to Egypt and save them from the famine. Whether God has given you much or little, His desire is for you to use whatever position you are in to advance the cause of truth and justice and to advance His Kingdom. Ask God to speak to you about the wealth and influence He has given you. Are you using it for the benefit of His Kingdom? Are there any changes that you need to make?

3. Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery (Gen. 37:2) and he was 30 years old when he was exalted by Pharaoh (Gen. 41:46). That means that he spent 13 years in slavery and it would be many more years before his brothers would bow down to him. God has His own timetable. When we push our own timetable we are showing that we know better than God. We must learn to patiently seek God's timing and let Him work in our lives according to His purposes and plans. He sees things that we can't see and He knows things that we do not know. Thank the Lord for His Sovereignty and His Providence. God is in control of even the smallest circumstances! Spend some time praising Him for this. Ask Him to show you 4-5 areas of your life where He is in control and has lead you according to His will. Thank Him for each one.

DAY 16



READ: Genesis 42

This chapter begins not with Joseph but with his father Jacob. The famine was severe and word got out that there was grain for sale in Egypt (v. 2). Jacob sent ten of his sons to go and buy this grain, but he kept Benjamin at home (v. 4). The journey to Egypt was a long one and probably took about three weeks (one way). Jacob had already lost the first son of Rachel and he didn't want to risk anything happening to Joseph's brother Benjamin. What these brothers did not know was that their brother Joseph, who they had sold into slavery, was governor over the land and he was the one who sold grain to the people. Joseph was a powerful man who had authority. Joseph's brothers came to him and bowed down before him (v. 6) which was a fulfillment of the prophetic dreams that Joseph had as a young teenager! What God says will ultimately come to pass and whatever God says in His Word, you can trust it. How would Joseph respond? He would have had over 20 years to prepare for this moment and here it was. The greatest test of Joseph's life occurred not when he was in prison and suffering injustice but when he was given unlimited power over his wicked brothers. Would he use this power to seek revenge? Or would he use his power to save his family from the famine?

Joseph recognized his brothers but did not reveal his identity to them. Rather, he treated them harshly and questioned them (v. 7-8) but not out of a heart of revenge or bitterness. Joseph remembered the dreams that he had dreamed of them and accused them of being spies (v. 9-11). His brothers were cruel men and couldn't be trusted. They had murdered innocent people in Shechem and they had sold him into slavery. Joseph needed time to figure out what was going on and how to deal with these wicked men. Had they changed? Where was his youngest brother Benjamin – had they killed him too? Was his father Jacob still alive? So, he puts them all in prison for three days (v. 17) to give himself some time to figure out what to do. It is important to note that Joseph's purpose in speaking harshly and accusing them of spying was not motivated by bitterness at all, but by a desire to covertly discover information regarding the health and well-being of his father, Jacob, and his younger brother, Benjamin. Joseph was working towards the goal of reconciliation, but he first needed to know if his brothers were repentant.

Joseph's brothers had probably never thought about what it was like to be held captive until Joseph put them in prison. As they waited there for three days they had much time to

think about how Joseph must have felt when they threw him into the pit and sold them as slaves. Would slavery be their fate too? It seems as though while they were locked up they began a spiritual transformation. Joseph was not being cruel, but was rather awakening the conscience of his brothers to see their own wickedness. At first Joseph's plan was to keep nine of them in prison and send one back home to fetch Benjamin (v. 15-16) but it seems that he changed his mind and decided to hold only one captive and let the other nine go free (v. 19); what mercy and forgiveness! The brothers realized that this distress had come upon them because of the way they had treated Joseph so many years ago (v. 21). They were feeling guilty for what they had done to him – twenty years had gone by but this past sin was still haunting them. Reuben used this opportunity to remind them that he had not wanted to sell Joseph into slavery (v. 22) – was this why Joseph kept Simeon behind, the second oldest? While they were talking among themselves in Hebrew they had no idea that Joseph could actually understand them (v. 23). Their regret for wronging him caused Joseph to turn away, and weep (v. 24). Simeon was left behind and the rest were sent back to get Benjamin with their sacks full of grain and with their money returned (v. 25). While on their journey home one brother found that his money had been returned and was shaken by what was going on (v. 27-28). They saw this as God remembering their sin because they figured that when they returned for more grain they would be accused of stealing this money. The thought of this being an act of kindness by the Governor (Joseph) never crossed their minds.

Once the brothers returned home they were honest with their father and told the truth about what happened to them in Egypt (v. 29-34). As they emptied their sacks every man's bundle of money was in his sack (v. 35). They explained to their father that in order to get Simeon back they would need to bring Benjamin to Egypt. This overwhelmed Jacob. Reuben foolishly offered his own sons if he went to Egypt and returned without Simeon and Benjamin (v. 37). Jacob refused his offer and puts the whole family in jeopardy for the sake of Benjamin (v. 38). Jacob was responding out of fear based on his favoritism of Rachel's children; in this case, Benjamin. He also responded with pessimism, “”. From a human standpoint it looked bad, but from God's viewpoint everything was working for Jacob's good and not harm.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. In this passage we can see Jacob's partiality toward Rachel's sons. This favoritism had taken Joseph away from him and he was not going to let this happen to Benjamin! The Bible is clear; showing partiality of one person over another is sinful (James 2:4). Ask the Lord to show you any areas where you favour one person over another. Maybe you favour the rich over the poor or the kind over the unkind. Maybe you favor one ethnicity over another...Ask the Lord to reveal to you any impartiality that is in your heart. Repent of it and ask for God's forgiveness.
2. The dream that God had given Joseph when he was a teenager had finally come true. As his brothers bowed before him, Joseph remembered this dream. I wonder how many times Joseph thought about this dream when he was a slave and a prisoner. God had given Joseph a prophetic promise years ago, that one day he would be a leader, he would be respected and his brothers would bow to him. Now it happened! Thank God for being true to His Word! His Word is 100% accurate and all His prophecies will come true! This is amazing, thank Him for it!
3. Joseph's actions towards his brothers were merciful and loving. God was using Joseph to create an opportunity for a spiritual awakening in his brothers. They had hidden their sin for years and now they were convicted of it. Sometimes we bury

things deep into our consciences. We try to forget the people we were cruel to as children. We try to forget the people we used for our own advantage. We try to hide the lies we have told people. We try to forget the people in need that we ignored. We try to forget the things we did in secret that we knew were wrong. But we can't forget because these things eat away at our hearts and our joy. We cannot escape from our past sins unless we repent of them before the Lord. We need our sin exposed so we can deal with it and keep it from haunting us. Ask the Lord to show you attitudes, behaviours, and actions from your past, maybe even your childhood, that you need to confess before Him today. Then repent of these things and ask Him to how you any restitution that you need to make. Then thank Him for His forgiveness.

DAY 17**READ:** Genesis 43

The last chapter ended with Jacob refusing to let the nine brothers take Benjamin to Egypt with them to release Simeon. As time went by the famine continued and they ran out of grain once more. Jacob asked them to return to Egypt and buy more grain (v. 2) but the brothers knew that there is no way that they would be able to buy more food without Benjamin at their side (v. 3). They pleaded with Jacob to let them take Benjamin with them on this second trip (v. 5). Jacob responded poorly to these circumstances and showed poor leadership of his family. His initial response was to ignore the problem and keep Simeon in prison in order to keep Benjamin safe. But when they ran out of food he began to ask why his sons were so honest with the Governor of Egypt (v. 6). Judah stood up to his father! They had only told the truth in response to very direct questioning (v. 7). What kind of father rebukes his sons for telling the truth? Jacob's ways of deception were deeply rooted in him. Judah pledged to keep Benjamin safe and offered to be liable for any harm that came to him (v. 9). Here we see Judah emerging as the leader of his family. In chapter 42 Reuben offered his own children but here we see that Judah offered his own life! What a difference! Here we see a glimpse of substitutionary sacrifice and Judah's line would eventually become the line of the Messiah! Jacob then suggests that they sweeten the pot by bringing presents for the Governor and that they return the money from the first purchase of grain showing that they were honest men. Finally, he consented to let them bring Benjamin along (v. 11-13). Jacob then prayed and gave Benjamin over to the care of his sons and his God (v. 14-15).

Joseph's brothers arrived with the gifts, the extra money and Benjamin. Joseph responded by arranging for the brothers to be brought into his house for a festive meal. At the invitation, the brothers believed that were being brought into the house to be made into slaves because of the money that was returned in their sacks the first time (v. 18). They responded by pleading with the steward of Joseph's house and telling him of the returned money showing willingness to pay it all back (v. 20-22). The steward replied that they should not be afraid and that God had supplied for them (v. 23) and he brought Simeon out to them. They were then given the opportunity to wash up (v. 24) and prepare for Joseph's arrival (v. 25). Can you imagine how nervous these brothers must have been as they waited for the Governor?

When Joseph arrived the brothers brought their gifts into the house for him (v. 26) and bowed to the ground. Joseph inquired about the welfare of their father (v. 27) and they replied, telling Joseph that their father was well (v.28), continuing to bow. Joseph then saw Benjamin, which moved him to tears and he hurried out to find a place to weep (v. 30). This was the brother that had the same mother as him! After he had his emotions under control he came back out and they began to serve the food. Joseph did not sit with his

brothers because “Egyptians” could not eat with Hebrews. He was continuing to conceal his identity. Then, Joseph placed them around the table according to their ages, which amazed the brothers (v. 33). They were given food to eat from Joseph’s table but Benjamin was given five times as much as the other brothers (v. 34).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Judah was unwilling to accept his father’s excuses and he took the leadership of the situation by doing what was best for everyone – finding a way to get Benjamin to join them on their journey to Egypt so that they could all get food and live! He was not thinking about himself, in fact, he even offered his own life as a substitute if something happened to Benjamin. Judah was thinking Biblically. Judah was loving his family. Love is doing what is best for others even if it means a personal cost! Ask the Lord to show you someone in your life that is tough to love. Then ask God to show you how you can do what is best for this person (this will always be aligned with God’s Word). Pray that you would have wisdom in following through on this and acting in a loving way.
2. Joseph had to control his emotions in order to do what was right. The goal was to bring his brothers to repentance and stimulate their spiritual growth. Acting in love may be acting contrary to our feelings. Pray that you would grow in reacting in godly ways to the circumstances in your life and not letting your emotions rule you. Pray that you would do what is right instead of doing what makes you feel better.
3. Joseph was always doing what was best for his brothers even though they had harmed him. This is a great example of loving your enemies and doing good to those who mistreat you (Matt. 5:43-48). It can be hard to love people who have been hurtful towards us.
 - Ask the Lord to show you a time in your life where someone was hurtful toward you that caused you significant pain.
 - Ask Him to show you to define how this has made you feel.
 - Ask Him to show you any lies that you believed about this person.
 - Ask Him to show you the truth about this person.
 - Ask Him to show you how He feels about this person.
 - Ask Him to show you how you can forgive and show love to this person.

DAY 18



READ: Genesis 44

This chapter begins with another test of the brothers. Joseph loaded them up with food, returned their money and put his silver cup in Benjamin’s sack of grain (v. 1-2). He then sent them on their way and shortly after he sent his steward after them accusing them of stealing from him (v. 3-5). The brothers claim their innocence (v. 8) and remind the servant that they had even returned the money which they found in their sacks the first time. They were so sure that they had done no wrong that they suggested that if someone was found with the cup, he should die (v. 9). Unfortunately, the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack (v. 12). What would they do? This was the worst thing imaginable! Now Benjamin would be sentenced to a life of slavery in Egypt or worse yet, sentenced to death.

The brothers then head back to Joseph’s house and fell before him (v. 14). This shows that they were beginning to think beyond self-interest. If they were only concerned about their own personal welfare they would have renounced Benjamin as a thief and deserted

him, continuing on their way back home. But they didn't do this! Joseph rebuked the brothers for their wickedness (v. 15). Judah spoke for the brothers, pleading for mercy as they were without any defense. Judah spoke of this as being retribution for the way that they had treated their "other" brother twenty years ago. The brothers were convinced that God was now holding them accountable for their actions so many years ago (v. 16). Joseph then demanded that the guilty person, Benjamin, be his servant (v. 17) and set the rest free.

The next few verses are a heartfelt plea by Judah, begging for the opportunity to speak to Joseph privately. Judah, assuming the role of the spiritual leader among his brothers, then summarizes the family dynamic. Judah told Joseph that their father was old and that Benjamin was a child of his old age, one whose brother was dead, who was the only one left of his mother, and that his father loves him (v. 19-20). He explained how they only brought Benjamin because of Joseph's demands, how this had brought great pain to their father, and how if any harm came to him their father would be distraught and that this would hasten his death (v. 23-29). Judah then made a personal appeal as his life was directly linked to Benjamin's life. He mentioned that he had made a pledge, offering himself as security, assuring his father of Benjamin's safe return. Judah then pleaded and offered himself as Joseph's slave instead of Benjamin (v. 33). This showed how deep Judah's transformation had been, as a slave would remain a slave until he died. This appeal revealed to Joseph that Judah's heart had undergone a significant change since those years so long ago when he had sold Joseph into slavery. Joseph would now be able to reveal his true identity because he had now witnessed genuine repentance. At first the brothers experienced regret, then they confessed their sin and now they were genuinely repentant. Judah could not stand the thought of causing any further suffering to his father and he was willing to do whatever it would take to make sure of this.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. In Genesis 38 we read of some detestable things that Judah did. But in Genesis 44 Judah emerges as the hero. In his attempt to spare Benjamin by taking his place we see a parallel to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Of all the 12 brothers, it would be Judah's line that the Messiah came from. Thank the Lord for transforming lives! He can change us to live like Jesus lived which includes changing our hearts, character, thinking and attitudes! Thank Him for the renewal journey that you are on! Praise Him for the work that He has done in your life.
2. Regretting sins or even confessing sins, is not enough. We must repent of our sins. This includes feeling real sorrow for sin, turning from sin, and hating our sin. This is what restores fellowship between God and man. "Repentance is the recognition of our sins which results in the kind of sorrow that brings about a change in our intellect, emotions, and will. In other words, repentance recognizes sin and is genuinely sorry for it, so much so that this sin will be shunned and a new course of action will be sought (Deffinbaugh, 1997)". Pray that the church would grow in genuine repentance; pray that we would feel real sorrow for our sins and turn from them. Pray that you would grow in see the gravity of your own personal sins and grow in having a repentant heart.
3. One of the reasons that Joseph took so long to reveal his identity to his brothers was because he was seeking true unity in the family. In order to have true unity there must be reconciliation. But in order for there to be reconciliation there must be true repentance. God can heal relationships but He does so in the context of true repentance and change of character that leads a person to live in a more godly

way. You are only responsible for your side of the relationship. You are to make sure that you are living a life of forgiveness and repentance towards people you have relationships with. Ask the Lord to show you a relationship in your life that is partially broken. Then ask the Lord to show you what your part is to play in the reconciliation. Are you to repent of a wrongdoing? Are you to forgive? Maybe even both? Dialog with God about this. Ask Him to show you what steps you can take to bring healing to this relationship. Then pray that the other party would do the same and that the relationship would be restored.

DAY 19



READ: Genesis 45

Judah's repentance in Genesis 44 has as profound impact on Joseph as he was overcome with emotion. He asked for everyone to clear the room so that he could reveal his true identity to his brothers in private (v. 1). His weeping was so overwhelming that the surrounding households could hear him (v. 2). Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him for they were dismayed at his presence (v. 3). Joseph then encouraged his brothers to come closer to him and restated that he was their brother, the one who they had sold into slavery (v. 4). He pleaded with them to not be grieved or angry with themselves because it was God who sent him there to preserve their lives (v. 5). He told them that the famine would continue for five more years and that God had put him in his position in order to keep the family of Jacob alive (v. 6-7). He explained that God had placed him as ruler over Egypt (v. 8) and pleaded with them to go to get Jacob and tell him that he was the ruler of Egypt (v. 9). He gave them the land of Goshen (v. 10) and told them to return with their families and livestock and that he would provide for them during the coming five years of famine (v. 11). He again pleaded for them to get his father Jacob and to tell him everything about his successes in Egypt. Joseph then embraced and kissed his brother Benjamin and the rest of the brothers (v. 14-15).

What a turn of events for the brothers! They were expecting to hear of judgement; instead they were offered land and provision during the famine and are told that their brother is still alive. Joseph was demonstrating not only that he had forgiven them but that he loved them! Joseph referred to the Sovereignty of God several times as he spoke to his brothers. I wonder if the brothers remembered the dreams that Joseph had as a teenager – the dreams about them bowing to him! God had put Joseph through a lot – slavery, false accusations, and imprisonment. God had also exalted Joseph to a place of glory and splendor as a ruler in Egypt and Joseph was willing to share this with his repentant brothers.

Pharaoh was pleased that Joseph was reunited with his family (v. 16) and he insisted that Joseph's family in Canaan all return to Egypt so that he could provide for them (v. 18). At Pharaoh's command, Joseph gave his brothers provisions for their journey (v. 21) including new clothes with Benjamin receiving the lion's share (v. 22). Joseph also supplied goods to his father and sent his brothers on their way (v. 23-24) requesting that they not quarrel on the journey. When the brothers arrived back in Canaan and told their father the news about Joseph being alive and the ruler over Egypt, Jacob did not believe them (v. 26). But when he heard the words that Joseph had said and saw the wagons, Jacob believed and determined to go and see him (v. 27-28).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. In this chapter we see the Sovereignty of God. Although people may do wrong things, God assures us that He can use “evil” to accomplish His good and perfect purposes. God’s ultimate purposes in these chapters were to save the house of Jacob, not harm Joseph. Joseph saw God’s purposes in his hardships and he sought to save his family instead of seek revenge. Ask the Lord to reveal to you a hardship that you have experienced in your life. This may be something like the death of a family member, marital problems, a financial stress, a relationship problem, or anything else that God brings to your thoughts. Ask the Lord to show you His ultimate purpose in this and how He can take this “evil” and accomplish His good and perfect purposes. Have you reacted rightly to this hardship? Are you trusting in Him? Are you growing because of it? Do you hold any offense towards God because of this?
2. The key to this chapter is forgiveness. Forgiveness means to set free or to cancel a debt or release from an obligation. It is a conscience decision on the part of the offended party to release the offender from the guilt and offense of the wrong committed. This is exactly what God has done for us! Forgiveness also frees the forgiver of anger and bitterness. Thank God for His forgiveness – it was not free - it cost Him something, it cost Jesus something. Thank Him for being a God who forgives the repentant! Thank Him for the relationship you can have with Him because of His forgiveness. Thank Him for the amazing blend of repentance and forgiveness and how this restores relationships!
3. Ask the Lord to show you someone in your life who has wronged you and who you need to forgive. This may be a recent small wrong or could be a huge wrong from the past. Then pray a prayer of forgiveness. Ask the Lord to remove any offense or bitterness that you may have in your heart towards this person. Then pray a prayer of blessing for this person.

DAY 20



READ: Genesis 46

Israel (Jacob) packed up everything that he had and began his journey to Egypt. Along the way he stopped at Beersheba and offered a sacrifice to the Lord. It was there where God spoke to him and told him to not be afraid to go down to Egypt. Many years before there had been a famine in Canaan and Abram had gone to Egypt to survive, without inquiring of the Lord. Later, there was another famine and Isaac considered going to Egypt but God forbid him to go. Now God promised to go with Israel to Egypt and make him into a great nation. He also assured him that his people would eventually return to the Promised Land (v. 2-4). God was reiterating the covenant that He made with Abraham. Finally, God promised Israel that he would see Joseph before he died. He would actually live almost forty years longer! This would have brought great comfort to him. Jacob took with him everything that he possessed, as well as all the members of his family. The register of Jacob’s family is included in this passage showing the family organization and lists of numbers (v. 8-27). The intent of including this in Scripture is to name those who would become tribes and family heads in the nation of Israel.

The chapter concludes with a happy reunion between Israel and Joseph. Judah was sent ahead to point the way to Goshen where the family would reunite. Joseph would be there and would see his father for the first time in nearly 22 years! They embraced, they cried and wept and now Israel was ready to die in peace (v. 29-30). As a good leader, Joseph was not careless about

settling his family in Goshen. He was careful to see that they were treated well by the Egyptians, even though the Egyptians found shepherds to be an abomination (v. 34). He instructed his brothers on what to say to Pharaoh in order to ensure they would be given the land of Goshen.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. As Jacob and his family were about to leave the Promised Land for Egypt, God reaffirmed his covenant promises and promised to go to Egypt with them and also promised to bring them back again. The time Jacob's descendants would spend in Egypt was first prophesied back in Genesis 15:13 and would be part of how God establishes them as a nation, His chosen nation. Sometimes we don't understand why God is doing what He is doing. This is because we often can't see the big picture. God has a pretty giant big picture because He is a pretty big God. Thank God for the control that He has over your life. Thank Him for knowing what He is doing when it comes to you and your family. Tell Him that you desire to trust Him more and ask Him to show you areas where you can grow in trusting Him.
2. Giving the family of Joseph the land of Goshen served a couple purposes. First, it would keep them from fighting with the Egyptians, who hated Hebrews. Second, it would provide best for their livelihood since they were shepherds. Third, it was near to where Joseph lived so he could see his family regularly. Fourth, it would keep the Hebrews from falling into the idol worship and pagan customs of the Egyptians. Joseph was strong enough to live among the Egyptian culture and stay walking with God but what would come of the future nation of Israel if they integrated into Egyptian life? Thank God for the church, a place where God's people can come and be protected from the culture of our world. Thank Him for cell, where people come to learn how to grow in relationship with Him. Ask Him to show you 3-5 other provisions in your life that you can thank Him for today.

DAY 21



READ: Genesis 47

Joseph, along with five of his brothers, went to Pharaoh to ensure that his family would settle in Goshen (v. 1-2). Pharaoh had already promised Joseph's family the best of Egypt (45:18), but Joseph was careful to see to it that this became reality. The brothers explained that they were shepherds and that had come to sojourn in the land because of the famine (v. 4) and they requested to dwell in Goshen. Pharaoh agreed to let them settle in the land of Goshen and even requested that they take care of his own livestock (v. 5-6). Then Joseph brought his father Jacob before Pharaoh. Pharaoh's graciousness to Jacob no doubt reveals his respect for this aged man as well as his regard for Joseph. Jacob explained that he had had 130 years of tough living (v. 9). Jacob was right; he had lived a pretty tough life. He struggled with his brother in the womb and he lived in a divided house where each parent favored a different child. He also gained the blessing by deception and had to live in exile and serve a deceitful father-in-law who tricked him and caused continual rivalry among his wives. Jacob suffered the defilement of his daughter Dinah and witnessed his sons committing evil acts such as murder. His beloved Rachel died in childbirth and to top it all off, his favorite son was presumed to be dead. Finally there was this famine that threatened his future. Jacob had lived a tough life. So, he blessed Pharaoh (v. 10), who was being so kind to him and his descendants. The Abrahamic covenant includes a promise that those who blessed his offspring would also be blessed. Then Joseph settled his family in the land and they were provided with food (v. 11-12).

The famine in the land was so severe that eventually the Egyptians ran out of money to buy grain (v. 15). Joseph responded to their lack of money by offering to give them food in exchange for their livestock (v. 17). This helped sustain them for a year but eventually they had no animals left (v. 18) so the people agreed to sell their land and themselves in exchange for grain (v. 19). They may have run out of money and livestock but they still had two valuable resources – land and labor. Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh except the land of the priests (v. 22) and the people became Pharaoh's servants (v. 21). In return, the people were given seed to sow the land and were required to give a fifth of the harvest to Pharaoh (v. 24). They responded with understanding that Joseph had saved their lives (v. 25).

While the Egyptians were struggling to survive during the famine, Jacob's family was thriving in the land of Goshen (v. 27). As Jacob grew nearer to death he requested to be buried in the land of Canaan (v. 29-30). This emphasizes that the family's future was in the Promised Land.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. There is a difference between the suffering and hardship that Jacob experienced and that which Joseph experienced. Joseph's suffering was undeserved, Jacob's was not. Jacob's suffering was a consequence of his foolish choices and actions. Ask the Lord to show you if there is a hardship in your life that is a consequence for your own foolish choices. Have you ever repented of this choice? Have you taken ownership of this choice? Dialog with God about this. Ask Him what He wants to tell you about this choice and the consequence.
2. During the seven years of plenty Joseph accumulated one fifth of the bumper crops in the land for Pharaoh leaving four-fifths of the crop for the Egyptian people. This should have given them plenty of grain to store up for the future. They must have not followed Joseph's example in saving for the future. Maybe they thought the years of plenty would just go on and on? Why not live the good life? In today's culture this would be equivalent to spending every penny that you make without ever saving. Joseph knew the hard times were coming therefore he put into place a plan but the Egyptians did not follow his wise actions and do the same. They failed to prepare for the future. Ask the Lord to show you how you are doing in preparing for the future – not only financially but spiritually? What does God want to say to you today about this?
3. Jacob knew the promises of God and he knew that his descendants would eventually go back to dwell in the land of Canaan. Requesting to be buried in the Promised Land showed His trust in God. Thank the Lord that He can be trusted in the hard times. Thank Him for His good and perfect purposes in our lives. Thank Him for His goodness in your life. Ask Him to show you 5-8 other things that you can thank Him for today.

DAY 22



READ: Genesis 48

Jacob was preparing for death by recounting God's faithfulness and care throughout his life. Jacob showed deep faith and gratitude to God. As death approached he pronounced a variety of blessings on all his sons. In this chapter we see him blessing Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. These boys were born in the land of Egypt. As sons of Joseph their future in Egypt may have seemed very bright as they could follow in their father's

footsteps and become great administrators and governors in the land of Egypt. But that was not God's plan. His plan was for them to put their hope in a land they had not yet seen, for they were destined to be a part of the "company of peoples" (verse 4) that God had promised Jacob. The events of this chapter set Joseph and his sons apart from the other eleven sons of Jacob. Ephraim received the blessing of the firstborn even though he was a grandson of Jacob. This indicates that the line of blessing would be traced through him and his descendants.

The chapter begins with Joseph going to visit Jacob because he heard that he is ill (v. 1). Joseph brought his two sons with him. Jacob then explained a vision that he received from the Lord in Canaan (v. 4) and he claimed Ephraim and Manasseh as his own sons, on par with Reuben and Simeon (v. 5). It was sort of like he adopted them. Later in Scripture we find that these sons became two separate tribes of Israel. This meant that when the land of Israel was divided into pieces, one for each tribe, Joseph's sons would get one-twelfth each, totaling one-sixth of the land. This represents a double portion of inheritance which is usually designated to the first born but in this case was designated to Joseph's line as he acted as the firstborn. Jacob mentioned that any other children that Joseph had would be Joseph's and not associated with Jacob's sons (v. 6) and he goes on to describe the death of Rachel (v. 7).

Jacob then desired to bless Joseph's sons (v. 9) and he verbalized his delight at being able to see Joseph's offspring (v. 11). Jacob laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim and his left hand on the head of Manasseh (v. 14) and blessed them. Joseph protested thinking that Jacob had mistakenly put the hand on the wrong head (v. 17-18) but Jacob assured him that Ephraim, the youngest should be blessed as the firstborn ahead of Manasseh (v. 19) because the younger would be greater than the older. Biblical history shows us that Joshua came from the line of Ephraim and this tribe became a leading tribe. Later the Ephraimites were rejected by God in favor of Judah. The chapter concludes with Jacob anticipating his death and that his family would return to the Promised Land (v. 21) and Jacob gave Joseph a mountain slope which he took from the Amorites, which possibly refers to Joseph's burial place.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Even though Jacob had suffered much in his life he could see that God had been his shepherd all the days of his life (v. 15). The mark of a mature believer is seeing pain and suffering as working together for good in his/her life and ultimately causing him/her to be drawn closer to God through it. While no one really should seek suffering, the mature come to appreciate it in the light of how beautifully God works to bring us closer to Him through it. God is good! Suffering is not too high a price to pay for experiencing a deeper intimacy with our great and good God! Here we see that Jacob had come to realize that suffering and trials were God's instruments to draw him into submission to God's will and to deeper spiritual intimacy with God. As believers, we would be much happier if we, like Joseph, decided to see the hand of God in our sufferings and if we learned to rejoice in our tribulations knowing that God is at work in us. Ask God to recount to you the struggles that you have had in your life and show you the work that He was doing in you through those sufferings. Thank Him for the opportunity that you have had to grow through each one of these struggles.
2. The book of Genesis is full of accounts of the younger child being chosen over the older child. It was that case with Seth and Cain, Shem and Japheth, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau and now Ephraim over Manasseh. Of course, this is not always the case. The thing to remember is that God can do whatever He wills is right and this

may not be according to our expectations. God is Sovereign and all knowing, He gets to decide, we are to obey and trust that He knows better than we do. Thank God for His sovereignty. Praise Him for doing what is right, holy and just. He is a good God!

3. God chose Jacob to be Israel, the father of His chosen nation. Joseph, the most righteous of his sons, didn't even get a tribe named after him and would not end up being the line of the Messiah even though Ephraim receives the blessing of the firstborn. The line of the priesthood would also not be Joseph's line but Levi's – even though he deceived the men of Shechem and slaughtered them. Judah, who failed morally, would become the line of the Messiah. Isn't it amazing how God can take unlikely and unpromising people such as you and me and do great and wonderful things through us! That is our amazing God! Ask Him to show you 5-10 things that He has saved you from. Then thank Him for making a difference in your life and for changing you into the person whom you are becoming, more like Jesus!

DAY 23

 **READ:** Genesis 49

After adopting and blessing Joseph's sons, Jacob now called his other eleven sons together to prophesy over them (v. 1). He then pronounced a blessing on each which reflected their past actions and told of the future of their descendants. In this passage Jacob clearly prophesies that Joseph and Judah were the most blessed, as their blessings make up the majority of the passage.

Reuben – the firstborn son status was forfeited because of his shocking behaviour with Bilhah (see Gen. 35:22-23).

Simeon and Levi – Jacob referred to their violent actions at Shechem who they murdered because of the rape of their sister Dinah. Their offspring would be scattered throughout the other tribes (v. 7).

Judah – his blessing included being held in high esteem by his brothers (v. 8) and included royalty and kingship (v. 10). Jacob was predicting the great empire of David and that the Messiah would come from this line.

Zebulun – would dwell at the sea, this prophecy has yet to be fulfilled

Issachar – the blessing tells of the strength of his descendants but the reference to a donkey speaks of being forced to work for others

Dan – he would judge, his blessing included a prayer for salvation

Gad – would be attacked by raiders and become warriors

Asher – they would enjoy a prosperous future with fertile land

Naphtali – is compared to a doe and would flourish

Joseph – he received the longest blessing which included a reference to his suffering (v. 23) and how God sustained him through it (v. 24). He would receive blessing and fruitfulness and would be set apart from his brothers (v. 26).

Benjamin – they would be aggressive warriors

The blessings on these children can be clearly seen in the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. Judah and Joseph (through Ephraim) were clearly distinguished from the rest of the tribes as leaders. This is mostly due to their significance in Genesis 37-50. Jacob then reiterated his desire to be buried in the land of Canaan, with his fathers (v. 29); in the cave

that Abraham bought for Sarah (v. 30). This cave would hold the remains of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah. His desire to be buried there reflects his belief in the permanence of the promise that the land would be given to the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac and now himself. The chapter concludes with his death (v. 33).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. The twelve sons who received these prophecies from their father would never leave Egypt and see the Promised Land. They would not see the fulfillment of these prophecies in their lifetimes. These prophecies were left unfulfilled until many years later. The words were never meant to be for the individual sons but for their tribes. Although some sons received “better” prophetic words than others, they were all blessed to be part of the nation of Israel – God’s chosen nation! None of the brothers could complain about their prophecy because that which was foretold was not independent of the past, but an extension of it. Each received the blessing “suitable to him” (v. 28). Some prophecies were influenced by their past sins (Reuben, Simeon and Levi). Joseph’s prophecy was based on his past faithfulness in suffering (v. 23-24). Thank the Lord for the gift of prophesy which is still present in the church today. Thank Him for listening prayer and that we can hear God! God speaks to His children! He cares and He continues to guide and direct people according to His plans. What a good God!
2. Not all of the prophecies listed in this chapter have been fulfilled. The promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were never fully realized in Israel’s history, and thus they are still viewed to be futuristic. There are still prophetic words in Scripture that are to be fulfilled. Pray for the church to receive a greater understanding of these prophecies. Pray for a better understanding of the End Times prophecies. Pray for a hunger to study the Word of God and to hear what the Holy Spirit has to say.
3. The twelve sons of Israel would not live long enough to see the prophecies that their father gave them fulfilled. So, why bother giving these prophecies in the first place? One reason was to show us how our character affects not only our own destiny but also the future of our offspring. There are bigger repercussions to our sin than we may initially think as generational sins and curses can be transferred down our generational line. These sons shaped the future of the nation of Israel even though the nation was not formed for many more years. If ever there was a reason to get right with God, this would be one of them! If not for yourself, do it for your kids and grandkids! Leave a legacy of holiness and righteousness for your families! Ask the Lord to help you live a godly and holy life so that you can leave a legacy of godliness for your children and grandchildren. Ask Him to show you any generational issues that you need to bring before Him today. Ask Him to show you what to do about each of them.

DAY 24



READ: Genesis 50

Jacob’s body was embalmed so that he could be transported to Canaan for burial, as he had requested. The text is clear that this was done by physicians and not priests, since embalming often had a spiritual element to it. This was uncommon practice for Hebrews as the only other person in the Bible who was embalmed was Joseph. The seventy days of mourning by the Egyptians shows the honor that they placed upon Joseph and his father. After this period was over, Joseph sought permission from Pharaoh to bury his father in

Canaan (v. 4-5). Pharaoh agreed and Joseph went up with a large processional of Egyptian elders and servants (v. 7) along with his personal household and his brothers. The flocks and herds were left in the land of Goshen (v. 8). What a sight this would have been as many people were part of this funeral processional! They continued to mourn at Atad for seven more days (v. 10). The sons did as Jacob asked and buried him in the cave that Abraham had bought as a burying place for Sarah (v. 13). Then everyone returned to Egypt (v. 14).

Now that Jacob was dead the brothers were fearful that Joseph would now want to pay them back for harming him. I guess they worried that Joseph was only being kind to them because their dad was still alive. Afraid to address Joseph face to face the brothers sent a messenger to confess their sins and seek forgiveness on their behalf (v. 17). This brought Joseph to tears as he was moved by their repentance. They gathered together and the brothers bowed before Joseph (v. 18) and proclaimed to be his servants. But Joseph offered them a hand of mercy and relief from their misery. He stated that God had transformed their evil into good and that many had been kept alive as a result of what had transpired (v. 19-21). These verses are some of the most powerful verses about God's sovereignty in the Scriptures. The principle that God rules even over sin and can work everything out to His glory and as part of His perfect plan is important to grasp. Joseph graciously forgave because he could see God's purposes of redemption through his suffering.

The next sixty years passed by without any record in Scripture. We are only told that Joseph remained in Egypt (v. 22) and that he lived to be 110 years old. He was blessed to see his children to the third generation (v. 23). As his death drew nearer he told his offspring that they would be brought out of Egypt by God and returned to the land that was promised to Abraham (v. 24). He also requested to have his bones be carried up from there (v. 25) when they left Egypt. The chapter concludes with the death of Joseph: he was embalmed and put in a coffin in Egypt (v. 26).

Conclusion to the Book of Genesis: The book of Genesis began with the creation of the world and with perfection in the Garden of Eden. It ends with two funerals, one in Canaan and one in Egypt.

The Book of Genesis has been limited and selective in the information that it gives us about the beginnings of mankind. It does not tell us everything that we could possibly know about that era in history but it does give us context for the rest of the Scriptures. We must understand that the purpose of this book is to show us how sin has stained all of God's creation as well as showing us the process of how God intends to redeem it. This redemption would come through the Messiah, a descendant of Abraham, through whom all nations would be blessed. This family line forms the backbone of the entire book.

The importance of this lineage cannot be overstated. The offspring of the woman (Gen. 3:15) becomes the source of hope for the redemption of the world, including all mankind. Her offspring is traced through Seth to Noah, then through Shem to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the twelve sons of Jacob. When God established the covenant promise with Abraham the divine promise of blessing was linked to a future descendent traced through his son Isaac. This lineage is usually passed through the firstborn, but not always. Jacob and Joseph were not the first children of their fathers, the Messiah would come through Judah, who was not a firstborn, but one who showed remarkable transformation. Kingship is associated with his offspring and we see later in scripture that David and Jesus come from the line of Judah.

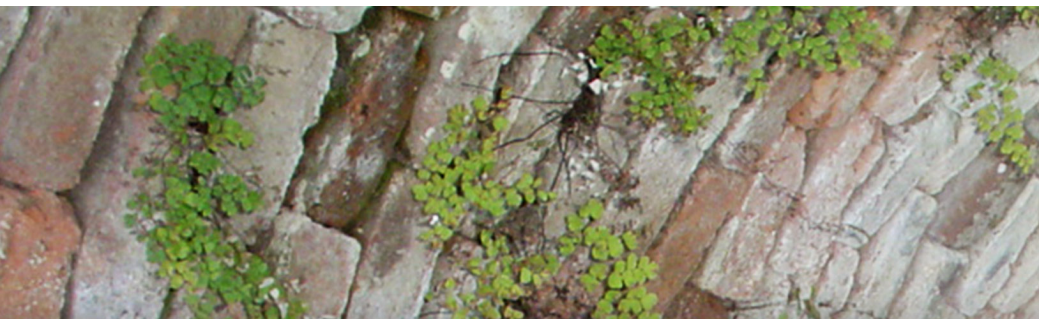
Genesis provides the foundation for the rest of the Bible. The promise to Abraham, that he will become a great nation, includes both land and descendants. Yet Genesis is full of sojourns. The nation of Israel living in the Promised Land would only happen hundreds of years later. This book gives us the background for the need of the Exodus and aims to tell the Jewish people how they came to live in Egypt.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Throughout Jacob's life we see an interesting preoccupation with death. When Joseph was taken from him his response was to desire death (Gen. 37:35). When Simeon did not return from Egypt because Benjamin was supposed to go to Egypt, his response again referred to death (Gen. 42:38). When Judah told him that Joseph was alive, his response was that he was at last ready to die (Gen. 46:30). As believers we do not need to despair as Jacob did as Christ brings HOPE and LIFE. What area of your life do you need HOPE for today? Spend some time listening in prayer asking the Lord to be your HOPE in that situation.
2. Joseph's response to his brothers was a godly way to respond to their wickedness. He showed no bitterness or anger for what his brothers put him through, in fact, he saw the providence of God through it all. We can accept suffering and mistreatment as part of God's plan and the source of our strength through the tough times is Jesus Christ. Only Jesus can give us the strength to endure hardship and come through it with loving and forgiving hearts. Thank Jesus for this. Praise Him for how He empowers us to live godly lives! Thank Him for being your Saviour, strength and friend.
3. The first eleven chapters of Genesis introduce us to the widening spread of sin in the world. Then chapters 12-50 begin to narrow the focus onto one family line that would ultimately bring a Saviour to conquer sin and bring blessing to the entire world. Thank God for Jesus! He is the only answer for a lost and dying world. Through Him we have hope, life, peace, light, love, goodness, etc. Ask Him to show you what He has to offer to you today. Pray that you would live in accordance to His Word and follow Him obediently, listening to Him for instructions on how to live your life.

NOTES



The Book of Genesis - *Part Two*

The second part of Genesis focuses on Jacob and his offspring, who will become the nation of Israel. These chapters depict a God who initiates interpersonal relationships and transforms human lives. In light of the evil portrayed in this book we see glimpses of God's plan to bring an ultimate solution to the problem of sin and restore the ideal of His original creation.

Genesis 49:10a (NIV)

"The scepter will not depart from Judah"



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