

# ABIDE

## DISCOVERING YOUR OLD TESTAMENT



### *Chapter 2*

## Good, Then Evil

### Genesis 1-3

What you really need to know about the book of Genesis is that this is the book that takes us all the way back to the beginning and gives us the account of the origin of everything. This is actually what the word “Genesis” means: “Origins.” Simply enough, right? Of course you knew that. Well what about this? The book of Genesis comes as the first part of a five part book known as the Pentateuch, which is a word that literally means “Five Part Book.” Therefore, Genesis is the first part, to the first five books of the Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), which were all written by God’s servant, Moses.

At this point, you might be tempted to pass by this information and not give it any real consideration, but you really shouldn’t. This five part book, in a sense, kick starts the rest of the Bible for us and provides real substance, meaning, and understanding for the remainder of Scripture. Furthermore, what we have in Genesis, are the seedlings that begin to grow and develop into the rich theology that we see in the whole of Scripture. For example, the book of Genesis is where we first learn about the power of God. We learn that He is self-existent, eternal, and creates **creates** literally out of nothing. He speaks, and it happens. It is in the book of Genesis where we learn about the character of God. We find that when God does create, it is a “good” creation. We also learn from this book the nature of God. From just the first few verses of Scripture, we are introduced to the beginning understanding of the ‘Trinity’ as God begins to reveal Himself. There is much more that can be said, and will be said both in this chapter and in latter chapters, but the point is this: Genesis is extremely important. If you get Genesis wrong, you get the entire Bible wrong. This is exactly why Satan has levied a major assault against this book. I mean, the truth contained in the book of Genesis has become so taboo in the world’s ‘modern’ societies, that many Christians are now ashamed of it. Instead of defending Genesis with boldness and love, its truth has been given away to the scientific community to be scoffed at and made into an intellectual laughing stock. And as a result, Christians have been giving away the very foundation that explains man’s greatest questions: 1) How did we get here? 2) What is the meaning of Life? 3) What went wrong? 4) How is it fixed? All of these questions are answered in Genesis. But if the answers are taken away, where do we go for answers? Ourselves? Others? Where? I am under the persuasion that we need to get recommitted to and reacquainted with, the book of Genesis. And being reacquainted with Genesis, really is to be reacquainted with who God is. In fact, this is exactly the truth that we are first confronted with... Who “God is.” *God Is*—



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## *Genesis 1:1*

**Genesis 1:1** *“In the beginning God...”*

There is so much packed into this one fraction of a verse it is incredible! In this verse we see God’s absolute oneness. There is no spouse along with God. There is no “Great Counsel” of deities as other pagan religions have maintained. There is only God.

Now just look at what this teaches us about God: It first teaches that GOD IS *self-existent and self-sufficient*.

He doesn’t need anyone and he doesn’t need anything to sustain Him. He doesn’t rely on external power in order to survive; he is the power. If the universe, or anything else were never created, God would have still always existed, and would continue to exist, right on into the foreverness of eternity.

A second aspect this verse teaches about God— and something that will become more clear as the chapter unfolds— is that GOD IS speaks of the *plural nature of God*.

We come face to face with this truth as we read the word “God” in verse one. The name that you are reading here is the name “Elohim” which is the word “God” written in the plural form. Do you see the last two letters at the end of the name “Elohim”— “**IM**”? This is indicating *masculine plural nouns*.

We get a little more insight when we come to **Genesis 1:26** when the Bible says, “*And God said, let **US** make man in **OUR** image, after **OUR** likeness:*”

Furthermore, once we get into the New Testament where we have a more perfect knowledge of God’s revelation, this teaching loses all ambiguity and debate and we simply see that God reveals Himself as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Now, pay attention to what I said. I said that that this teaching loses ambiguity, not it’s depth in terms of explaining it. I tell you this only to assert what the Bible is telling us here. God is plural in nature.

## *God Creates— Genesis 1:1-31—2:1-25*

**Genesis 1:1** *“...created the heaven and the earth.”*

I want you to think about how simple, yet profound that statement is. As was stated previously, as far as our universe is concerned, there was a time when it did not exist. There was a time when the only thing that sat where the entire cosmos are currently operating, was a thick pitch of impenetrable blackness. Nothingness. Nothingness used to reside where our world is right now. And once again, even when there once was black nothingness, there was God.

But there came a time when God stepped into the darkness and turned on the light of creation. Out of His own volition and self-will, God created the heaven and the earth. He wasn’t bound by obligation. He was not coerced by some external force. He created because He wanted to. More specifically, God created, because He wanted you.

And understand, God didn’t create as some have suggested He created and just simply started the process of creation, and then allowed let evolution to take over. That is not what the Genesis account tells us. What Genesis tells us is that when God began to speak the cosmos and life into existence, He did so by giving everything the fulness of maturity. The stars began to shine as if they had always been shining. The spinning and courses of the solar systems began operating as if they had been doing so for eons. Plants, waters, lands, and animals not only suddenly existed at God’s Word, but began behaving and functioning in complete wholeness.

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But then we have to stop for a moment and consider God's crown of creation— man-kind— separately. When you are reading **Genesis 1:26-30**, your taking in a general, overall synopsis of God's creation of, and intention for, all of man-kind. In this instance, Adam and Eve were create, were a married couple, and had already received their instruction from God concerning the purpose for their lives.

However, once we get to **chapter 2**, we are taken from a “general overview” in the creation and formation of man-kind, to a specific explanation of how this was accomplished. **Genesis 2:1-25** is a retelling of the same story mentioned in **chapter 1** and explains a great deal.

First, we learn that we, mankind, **were (are?)** the only creation who received the “breath of life.” Meaning, that as God is eternal, we reflect who He is by having an eternal side to us. In **Genesis 2:7** the Bible says, “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*” The first act God completed in creating us, was giving us the ability to be with Him forever. God made an eternal commitment to us before anything else.

Second, God gave a job assignment to Adam. In **Genesis 2:8-15**, God planted a garden, placed Adam inside of it, and then instructed him to care for it. I want you to notice again how we were created to reflect God in this instance. Ultimately, God created and therefore, He is the Supreme Owner, but Adam— representing mankind— was to be God's vice-regent on the earth. As God was productive in creation, man was to be productive in the garden. As God cared for His creation by providing resources, man was to care for God's creation and cause it to produce. As God's design in creation displays His magnificent intellect, man was to use his intellect to “dress and keep” the garden in which he was placed, as well as naming the animals as God instructed (**Genesis 2:19-20**).

A third truth we find in this passage is the moral standard of our Creator. God created a moral law for Adam. Have you ever wondered why someone is able to know right from wrong? Have you ever wondered why every culture, no matter the age, had some set of varying rules for living? It starts right here with God. God IS the standard of moral perfection. In other words, moral law flows out from His character and not the other way around. And in this passage, God places the “*Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil*” before Adam and instructs him not to eat it or death would follow. Adam, everyday thereafter, had a moral choice to make: would he believe and trust God by believing His word, or would he refuse God's word?

Fourth, we find that just as God is a Being in relationship, man was also created to be a being “in relationship.” What is meant by this is that just as the Trinity is explained in the fulness of the New Testament, we see that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit operate in complete harmony and exclusivity with One another. God is a Being “in relationship.” There is a complete Oneness in the Godhead that cannot be broken or added to.

This is where the creation of Eve comes into the story. **Genesis 2:21-25** tells us about God's creation of the first marriage. God said, “*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him*” (**2:18**). So as the narrative continues, God caused Adam to sleep, took a rib from him, and then formed from Adam his wife, Eve. Adam, then recognizing this significance after Eve was brought to him and said, “...This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (**2:23**).”

Together they were a complete compliment to the person of God. They were one, just as God is One. There was a complete harmony among them, and there were no additions.

## *God Restores— Genesis 3:1-24*

This is where we move into the **third chapter of Genesis**. In Chapter 3, we are introduced to the most ardent enemy of God, His creation, and everything God stands is; Satan Himself. To be sure, one really does need a good working knowledge of the New Testament in order to piece this together. In just reading this account, we would be left with some very intriguing questions were it not for the the full revelation of Scripture given to us. Questions like: what is this serpent's origin? If God created all in the earth, and all creation was "very good" what happened to this creature? How did it learn to communicate? How did it determine to levy an attack against God? However, once again, we know from passages like **Revelation 12:9** and **Revelation 20:2** that this is the Devil, the deceiver of the whole world.

Once the stage is set for this serpent, we know what happens next. We read on in sorrowful anticipation as Adam and Eve are lead away from their trust in God, from the bliss that He has created for them, and from their sinless innocence, and toward the prospect of being "gods" themselves. How would this happen? By eating of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" and thus breaking the one command that God had set before them.

From here, there is only a spiral downward as Adam and Eve begin to cover themselves, then they hide from God, and then a "blame game" immediately follows as God confronts them about what they had done (**Genesis 3:1-13**).

What happened after this event left reverberating mark on all of human history. God's image in His creation of man was now marred and ruined. Man was now able to know good and evil, but chose evil in order to come to that knowledge. Therefore, they became inconsistent with God's character and both spiritually died that very moment, deserving eternal spiritual judgment having sinned against God's eternal justice.

However, this is not where the passage stops. God instead, gives mercy. Where immediate judgment was warranted, mercy was given.

God also began providing grace. From the time Eve finished her explanation in verse 13, the next words come from God as He instituted the course. Now, many people may not like to think of this curse as a measure of God's grace, but in reality, that is exactly what it was. Because mankind was now separated from God relationally, but He still desired relationship, there had to be a way for us to be drawn to Him. God's curse is our signal that something is wrong in the universe.

It was also in this instance when God gave a promise of full restoration. God, in essence said, you failed, but I love you, and I'm going to restore you to your original position." We see this in Genesis 3:15 when the first prophecy is given in Scripture. It was a prophecy that spoke of how ultimately a Savior would come and crush the curse of death and restore us back to Him.

Also, if you drop down to **verse 21**, you will find that God killed an innocent animal to cover their shame. This was a picture of God's promise of restoration. Because of our shame, God's justice still demanded death. But the picture here is that God would provide an eternal sacrifice to cover our shame.

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**Summary:** In just these first three chapters of Genesis, we've covered a tremendous amount of history. It is in these very pages where we first learn about the power and nature of God. We learn His name, His character, and His desire. Furthermore, this is where we learn our origin, purpose, and function. It is because of this first part of Genesis that we learn why there is evil in the world and how we recognize it.

If it were not for Genesis, we would be completely adrift and hopeless. That said, it is painfully obvious that

these first few chapters not only show us who God is, but actually reach down and show us who we really are, and that God wanted us anyway. It has a message for us if we would simply take the time to listen.

### *Chapter 3*

# The Downward Spiral

## Genesis 4

If Adam and Eve didn't understand the full effect of the fall before, they definitely understand it by the time we reach Genesis chapter four. The way the course of events come about, it seems almost breath-taking how fast humanity spiraled downward as a result of sin entering the world. In just one generation, we go from "paradise" in a Garden of Eden, to "sorrow" at a graveside service, and it only gets worse.

Let's follow the progression:

### *Marriage and Procreation— Genesis 4:1-2*

God issues a command for mankind to replenish the earth and this is exactly what happens. Adam and Eve have their first child and call him, Cain. Directly after this, we read that Adam and Eve had another child and called him Abel. At this point, we're not given a tremendous amount of information, but we do know that both grew to lead productive lives: Cain as a farmer, and Abel as a shepherd. So far so good!

Interestingly enough, this story begins with a tremendous amount of optimism. Eve was full of faith and hope and realized that by God's grace and with his help, she conceived a son... and no doubt, had this same understanding with all of her other sons and daughters.

To Eve, life meant something. She knew it was special. This is also indicated in the names that are selected for these two boys. Cain means "possession." It was an indication that God had given him to her. The name Abel means "Breath." It's an indication that there is an importance to life. That he has life in him. What a special moment this was for Eve!

### *Acceptable Worship and Unacceptable Worship— Genesis 4:3-7*

In just a few short verses, we are fast-forwarded through time and are able to see the boys grow into men, and men who have been taught to serve God. Apparently, both Cain and Abel decided to give spontaneous acts of worship to God. As we read, we find that in this act of worship, Cain brought some of his produce and offered it to God, and Abel brought one of the 'firstlings' of his flock. You might say, "Perfect, I've done that as well! I love giving God spontaneous acts of worship!" The problem here however, was that God accepted Abel's sacrifice and did not accept Cain's.



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This really is an important lesson for us to grasp; God does not accept anything we would like to call an “*offering*.” We have to come to God on His terms, and with only those offerings that He has deemed worthy.

Now, as far as this situation is concerned, several ideas have been given as to why God did not accept Cain’s offering. Perhaps it was what he gave that became the issue. Perhaps it was the attitude in which he gave that made it unacceptable to God. Perhaps it was a combination of the sacrifice given and his attitude while he gave it. From the passage, we learn that Able gave God the first and the best of his flock. These verses seem to indicate that Cain’s offering was neither. Whatever the case, there is every reason to believe that Cain knew exactly what God required, but decided to give what he wanted anyway.

In contrast, we see a detailed difference in Abel’s offering. Abel gave not only the first of his flock, but the best of the first of his flock. There it is: God gets what’s first, and God gets what’s best. That kind of giving comes from the heart.

However, what is most significant is that during God’s correction of Cain, God graciously gave Cain a means for correction in verse 7.

At this point, you might expect to read about how Cain asked God for forgiveness and made a correction for his sacrifice, but this is not how the story unfolds.

### *Jealousy and Murder— Genesis 4:8-18*

It is incredible when you’re reading this story, that out of all of the things that might have happened, this does not seem to fit. Cain speaks to his bother Abel, walked with him out in a field, looked around to see if anyone was looking, and at once, all of his jealous rage poured out over his own brother and in a single moment of violence, killed Abel. The way the Hebrew text reads is that he actually butchered him.

What is worse is that once God confronts Cain about this act, he attempts to avoid God’s question. **Verse 9** says, “*And the LORD said unto Cain, ‘Where is Abel thy brother? And He said, I know not: Am I my brother’s keeper?’*” As we said, one generation removed from mankind experiencing complete perfection and the ability to go in and out of God’s presence at will, to murder.

And I wish this was the worst part of the story: not only was Cain so captured by wicked jealousy that he killed his own brother; not only did he not take responsibility for it, Cain actually complained about his punishment! After God calls out Cain and issues his punishment, in **Genesis 4:13-14**, Cain says, “... *My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou has driven me out this day from the face of the earth: and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that everyone that findeth me shall slay me.*”

Lastly, Cain has one last act of defiance. Shamefully, this happens after God graciously provides protection even in light of his callousness toward what he had done (Genesis 4:15). Cain moves further east from where God had once been able to dwell with his people and he built his own city in a land called Nod. This tells us just how hardened Cain’s heart was and is a picture of a man with no faith and in complete rebellion against God. Ironically, The name “Nod” is the same word used for the word “fugitive,” a perfect description of Cain’s life.

### *Polygamy and Retaliation— Genesis 4:19-24*

From here, the story doesn’t get any better. In this portion of chapter 4 we are introduced to a man named Lamech— A descendant of Cain. And once we are introduced to him, we are simultaneously introduced to the supreme breakdown in God’s pattern for marriage known as polygamy (the taking of multiple wives).

What can also be seen in this passage is that murder was here to stay. According to these verses, Lamech had killed a young man (perhaps a young worrier), who had offended him. You should notice also Lamech’s

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outrageous assumption for this crime, “*And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, ‘Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and seven fold* (**Genesis 4:23-24**). Lamech assumed that since God had showed the father of his lineage (Cain) a measure of mercy by avenging his death seven times (Genesis 4:15), that he should be protected seventy-seven times for his sin.

There was no repentance, no sorrow, no remorse, and no responsibility taken. Only an expectation of God to take care of any negativity to come his way if things didn’t go his way. Sound familiar?

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**Summary:** In our time, sadly, we are very familiar with death. We’ve got funerals down. We know who to call, we know what to wear, we know to find the right memorial. Just think about that: In our time, there are people who actually make a living conducting services and maintaining cemeteries for our fallen.

But just try to imagine this situation. You’ve not been acquainted with death yet and suddenly your oldest child kills his younger brother. You’re standing at the grave. What do you say? Who might you call? This first couple are feeling the aftershock of the gritty reality of what a deceased human life actually looks like. Shaking their heads they look down and simply think, “What have we done?”

Sadly, this is the world we understand... but this was not how it was supposed to be.

### Discussion Points:

Discuss how each of these points are applied to this Biblical narrative:

- There comes a time in every person’s life when they are completely responsible for their actions.
- A Heart Turned from God, is also a heart turned from humanity.
- There is always a personal price to pay for unrepentant sin.
- True worship is more than just a religious act.
- The Closer we are to God, the more we are alienated from the world (1 John 3:11-13)



## *Chapter 5*

# The Scarlet-Lining

Genesis 5-11

You know, it's interesting that sometimes we hear of people tell those who experience some sort of hardships to look for a "silver-lining." That is, they are to look for a possible "good" in a bad situation. That may be good advice to an extent, but in Christianity, it's a little bit different. Instead of looking for a silver-lining, what we need to be looking for is the Scarlet-Lining, the hope for all mankind, Jesus Christ.

When we learn to do this, suddenly, our circumstances suddenly have a purpose. Now, we may not know what that purpose is every time, but we do know that because of Christ, every single circumstance can be endured with a knowledge that 1) God loves us and 2) God can gain glory out of it.

This is important to remember in light of the depressing scenes from which we've just come. Jealousy, premeditated murder, shock, callousness in light of the crime; pain, chaos, destruction, sin, and corruption— a world and way of life we are very familiar with— all occurring just one generation after the fall of mankind.

But if you remember, in **Genesis 3:15** God promised that He would raise up a seed from Eve that would ultimately crush sin and death forever and completely restore what was lost in the fall. And from that point forward, all throughout the pages of the Old Testament, God continued to remind His people of this very promise.

Moving forward through the Bible, we know this seed was the God-Man, Jesus Christ our Savior who became sin for all mankind, bore our inequity and sorrow, and was crushed under the judgment of God the Father in order that God's prophecy be fulfilled and mankind could be redeemed back to God.

However, it is important to remember that at the time when all of these events were taking place, the people who knew and honored God could not see the full picture that we can see on this side of the cross. They simply relied upon God's promises, looking for that Scarlet-Lining, and it all begins right here.

Just follow along as these passages unfold.

# *The Scarlet-Lining Was God's Promise of Hope— Genesis 5:1-6:8*

Starting in **Genesis chapter 5**, you might see something disturbing if you look close enough. You'll read the words, "... and he died." As this generational account is given, it is reminding us of something very sobering, death continually comes for us as a result of the fall. Over and over again we read this pattern: 1) The telling of how long a particular individual lived 2) How old they were when they had their first child 3) They die... which equates to: A person is born, they get married, they have children, and they die.

The above passage was written as a **s** separate section, but is still a continuation of the "Creation Drama." It was actually written to be a shock to the reader so that we would know what was happening to us, as the only creation made in God's image, was in complete contrast to God's original design. However, what we find inside of this passage is very interesting. When you're examining this portion of Scripture you should notice is that an entirely new line of genealogies are being given. In Genesis four we're given a genealogy out of the line of Cain. In Cain's family line we see an obvious departure from God and His way. But starting in **Genesis 4:25** we see something exciting, "*And Adam knew his wife again; she bare a son, and called his name Seth: For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.*"

These are sad words, but great words. Though Eve recognized that her own son had become the murderer of her younger son, God had blessed again and given her a third child named, Seth. The name Seth means "Compensation" and holds the idea that God not only provided her a son to replace Abel (as compensation), but a son that could possibly be the one whom God had promised and would bring restoration. She was looking for the "Scarlet-Lining" because of God's promise.

Obviously, we know that Seth was not the Messiah, however, it is through this line that God started building and preserving a righteous line that would lead to the Messiah. Just look at what happens in the line of Seth in verse **26 of chapter 4**, "*And to **seth**, to him also there was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the LORD.*"

If we were to follow this lineage in chapter 5 in detail, we would see that there was growing anticipation of God's fulfillment of His promise with each generation, and this anticipation came with fathers from the line of Seth teaching their children how to follow after God, and more than that, explaining to them that God promised to do away with sin and death.

And because of this promise, fathers were so expectant of it, and had such faith in God to complete it, they began to wonder if their sons could possibly be the One whom God had promised. Just look at some of these names:

- "Mahalaleel" means "Praise of God"
- "Enoch" means "Dedicated"

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- “Lamech” means “Powerful”
- “Noah” means “Rest”
- Note: Look at what Lamech said about his son Noah in **Genesis 5:29**, “*And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.*”

### *The Scarlet-Lining Was God’s Promise of Mercy— Genesis 6:1-10:32*

Obviously we have entered into the flood narrative when God justly poured out His judgment on the earth for the pervasive sin that existed throughout mankind. If we were simply thinking of this event in terms of its bare facts, we could categorize it simply as:

- 1) Man’s wickedness was pervasive on the earth
- 2) God decided to send judgment by way of a world-wide flood
- 3) God provides grace to one family (Noah and family) and instructs him to building an **arc**
- 4) The **arc** is to sustain Noah and his family, as well as two of every kind of animal for over a year
- 5) Judgment is carried out with 40 days and 40 nights of rain
- 6) God pushes a “restart” button on humankind with Noah and his family
- 7) God gives a promise never to flood the earth again and gives the sign of the rainbow.

This is what we might know as the “Sunday School” version, but there is a tremendous amount more to the story than this. The flood narrative actually centers around a theme of God’s commitment to mankind and to the New Covenant He would establish. It is from this point, God would continually be known by His people as a “Covenant-Making” “Covenant-Keeping God. And what makes this so very significant is the fact it is revealed in this passage the absolute depravity of man and the absolute holiness of God.

This section starts out by telling us a story... about us. We can certainly get stuck on information in this passage about who the “Sons of God” were or, who are the “Daughters of men?” We can give ideas about how they must be evil angels taking wives of mankind, thus creating giants, corrupting the human race, and becoming a threat to God’s plan in sending a Messiah. We can talk about how they are simply a ruling body of men who were evil and corrupting the line of Seth and therefore a threat to God’s plan in sending a Messiah. Or, if there those don’t work, we can talk about other theories that could possibly apply here. However, ideas like this muddy the water a little bit and miss the point as to what the real issue is. The real issue is the heart of man.

In **Genesis 6:5** we read, “*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and the every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” This was not merely an indictment of people living during this time, this was a holy observation of a holy and righteous God made toward all of humanity. That said, what this passage makes abundantly clear is that before God, we are all hopelessly guilty and worthy of death.

However, in this passage, we are also introduced to the Scarlet-Lining of God’s **Mercy** and grace; mercy because just judgment was held back, and grace because a means of salvation was provided for all who would receive it.

This is when we read of a man named Noah who, “...*found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*” This one man

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understood the significance of why he was alive; he understood the significance of who he was and who God was and this caused him to be... *“a just man and perfect in his generation, and to... walk with God.”*

This is what a true understanding of God’s mercy and **Grace** will do. It will overwhelm you to follow hard after God, no matter what anyone else does around you. And it is this kind of person that God loves to use as a vessel for His glory; and that is exactly what we see here.

Despite the fact that all of humanity stood guilty before God (even Noah), He used Noah as a vessel of His glory by commissioning him to build an **Arc** of salvation. Where there should have been judgment on all, God gave mercy and grace.

We also need to pay attention to the fact that God’s grace is even more amplified after He commissioned Noah to preach of the coming judgment the entire time the **Arc** was being built. However, only the animals God provided to the **Arc** and Noah’s immediate family.

And just as God promised, everyone and every creature on the arc were completely saved; and every person on the outside of the arc were completely destroyed.

A last piece to this narrative comes by way of the rainbow that came after God’s New Covenant with Noah, and really, to all of mankind mentioned in **Genesis 9:1-19**. This was unilateral and binding covenant of God’s mercy that explained that God would continue to allow the flourishing of the human race and would never again flood the earth. Actually the reason we are still here, is because this convenient is still in effect.

### *The Scarlet-Lining Was God’s Promise of Preservation— Genesis 11:1-9*

The third major theme in this section happens at the infamous “Tower of Babel.” After the flood, God had given a command once again to be fruitful and multiply, and further gave instruction about the sacredness of human life.

However, in this section, we find that once generation after generation had passed, the sacredness of human life turned into an unholy pride, and instead of being fruitful and multiplying, we find that people were centralizing and unifying. And in this centralization and unity, they all have what they think is a fantastic idea. They’ll build a tower.

Now, if it was just a tower that would be one thing; but it was not just a tower, it was a challenge to God.

**Genesis 11:3-4** says, *“And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”*

They wanted recognition and show God and the rest of the world, in case they were scattered abroad, just what they were made of! What is funny is that the way verse 5 reads in the Hebrew text is that God was illustrating how He actually had to come down to see this little tower and little city that they thought was so big and impressive. *“And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.”*

What we learn ultimately from this situation is that when people are unified, sin actually compounds and gets worse and worse. But with God’s covenant, His objective is to preserve us— and so what He does is given to us in Genesis 11:6-9:

“And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

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Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of the all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

The point is that God had promised to preserve the human race but that we posed a threat to ourselves by this kind of unity. Therefore, God separated the people groups so that we could be saved from ourselves. God had to separate us in order to preserve us.

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### **Summary:**

Though we do not look to the same promises that these people looked to, we can still look back and see that our God is truly a promise keeping God. Further, we can see that since He is a promise keeping God, then He will certainly fulfill those promises that have yet to be fulfilled. We look to the promise of that Scarlet-Thread of hope Jesus to come back for His own.

### **Discussion Points:**

Discuss how each of these points are applied to this Biblical narrative:

- There is always cause to praise God in light of the continual mercy and grace He has shown us.
- Like Noah preached salvation by way of an **arc** in his day, we must preach salvation by Christ in our day.
- Pride always leads to disobedience
- God never allows the proud to ultimately succeed

## ***Chapter 6***

# Faith 101

## Genesis 11:26-25:11

It is interesting to think about the fact that there are only a handful of chapters given to provide the accounts of creation, all that it contains, and God having to “restart” the entire human race, but by the time we start reading **Genesis:11:26**, an entire thirteen chapters dedicated to the life of one man, His relationship to God, and the promise regarding his family.

After learning this, the question that I had was, “Why?” I mean, you would think it would be the opposite. Why did God choose to give more information here than He did in creation or providing more clear and concise answers for other portions of Scripture? Further, once we even get into Abraham’s life, it’s not like we’re reading a satisfying biography. There are substantial pieces of Abraham’s life and origin that are missing. Once again, the question “Why?” comes to mind.

But could it be that God’s primary objective is to teach us about who He is, rather than only teaching us about what He did? Could it be that God desired a right Theology from us, before we became concerned with anything else?

This should tell us a great deal about the central purpose in God, and Him providing us Scripture in the first place. Yes, of course, we would like to know answers to different questions not specifically answered in the Bible. But when we come to the story of Abraham, it becomes very clear that God did not give us Scripture to satisfy our taste for philosophical or metaphysical questions; He gave us Scripture to teach us about how we can have a right relationship with Him.

Keep this in mind as we briefly follow Abraham’s life and enroll with him in Faith 101.

### *God, I Will Go— Genesis 11:26- 12:6*

At the time when we are first introduced to Abraham, we find that his name is not Abraham at all— it’s Abram— and Abram was not a follower of God, he was a pagan. He was actually on a trip with his father, Terah, who was moving his family from Ur to Haran and both were large places of worship for the moon god, Sin.

If we do a little Bible research though, we find from **Acts 7:2**, that while Terah and his family were in Mesopotamia as they were traveling, Abraham received a call from God (Genesis 12:1-3) and told him to leave everything behind in order to go into a land that God would show him once he got there.

Now, for the most part, we are creatures of habit. We usually like where we live, we like our acquaintances, friends, and family, we like our livelihoods, and we certainly like our security. Any step into the unknown most of the time will cause us to think twice before actually doing it. But what we witness with Abraham is God telling him to leave everything— including comfort and companionship of some of his closest family members— and go to a place that he will only know once he gets there. Also, in this passage we see that Abraham was also promised that his seed would be made into great nation.

I don’t know how much you like surprises... but this was a significant surprise. If you can imagine the breakfast conversation the next morning, you might get a feel of just how significant it was. This wasn’t a situation where

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Abraham would merely be blindfolded and told that when he opened his eyes, there would be a huge present waiting for him. This was a life-altering decision. You can almost guess the response of his father after hearing the news, “God, spoke to you... and told you to leave your family?” “Yes,” said Abraham. “Well, have you ever met this God before? How do you know He is better than the god we serve? You would be willing to trust Him?” Abraham would say, once again, “Yes.” His father might then ask questions like, where are you going? How long will you be there? You can’t just trust any god, you know. However, Abraham, at 75 years old, trusted God, took his wife and his nephew Lot, and started traveling (Genesis 12:4-8).

This was the beginning of Abraham’s faith journey. The time in his life when he told God, “God, I will go.” and never looked back. Now, certainly in this chapter, and in a few following, we find mistakes and trials in Abraham’s life (and they won’t be his last), but this first step of obedience was a critical turning point. Abraham’s faith in God began to be solidified right here.

And just like Abraham, there was a critical act of obedience toward God in the life of the believer— a crucial moment when we trusted Christ as our personal Savior. Does that mean that this was the end of our trials or mistakes? Absolutely not. But this was where our faith in God began, and the point from which it started to grow.

### *God, Let Me Help— Genesis 12:7-21:34*

In the next major event in Abraham’s life we find that it had to do with the promise of his seed. God promised to make from his seed, a great nation, and that whoever would bless him, God would bless, and whoever cursed him, God would curse (Genesis 12:2-3). However, there was one major problem (at least Abraham and his wife Sarah thought there was a problem), they were getting well out of range of ‘normal’ parental age— especially Sarah.

Years passed; and as they did, Abraham had to endure the pride of his nephew Lot (Genesis 13:1-13), God renewed his vow with Abraham (Genesis 13:14-18), Abraham had to rescue Lot from a kidnapping (Genesis 14), and God promises Abraham an heir and renews his covenant with him again. During all of this time, doubt was lingering in the heart of Abraham and his wife Sarah, despite God’s reassurance that in fact a son would be given.

So after what was deemed to be too much time for God to work out this situation, Sarah decides she needs to help God out. (That doesn’t sound like anything we would do does it? We never think that God isn’t working fast enough or is incapable of dealing with your situation so you try and handle it yourself, do we? Sadly, we do. And sadly, just as in this situation, it worked out terribly.)

As the story continues, Sarah gave Abraham Hagar, after convincing him that God needed help, and told him that the child Hagar would bare would be the heir that God had promised. Abraham consents and eventually has a son named Ishmael, and a tremendous amount of family drama was created (Genesis 16).

Let’s pause right here for a moment and speak about how God, in His grace, began to intervene in this situation, and eventually built a great nation out of the line of Ishmael. This is what God does, He provides grace even in the middle of our sin. However, as we have seen all throughout the pages of Genesis this far, and will continue to see throughout the Bible (and our lives), that consequences of sin always remain. God’s grace does not erase our action just because we are sorry.



## *God, You Are Good— Genesis 21*

After the birth of Ishmael, a significant amount of time passes again, however, this time, Abraham and Sarah wait. And during this waiting time, several events have taken place:

- 1) Genesis 18:1-15— Abraham and Sarah host angelic guests and reaffirm God's promise **(add a period)**
- 2) Genesis 18:16-22— The angelic guests tell Abraham of the impending judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah **(add a period)**
- 3) Genesis 18:23-33— Abraham starts his intercessory prayers for these two cities but can't find any righteous so that the cities will be spared **(add a period)**
- 4) Genesis 19:1-11— The angels visit Lot and give instruction that he and his family must leave. Besides this, there are several heinous acts that occur **(add a period)**
- 5) Genesis 19:12-29— Lot and family are finally forced to leave and the two cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed. Also, Lot's wife is taken for looking back to the city **(add a period)**
- 6) Genesis 19:30-38— A grotesque sexual act takes place between Lot and his two daughters **(add a period)**
- 7) Genesis 20:1-18— Abraham has another bout with dishonesty between he and Abimelech **(add a period)**

Finally, after all of this we get to read these words in **Genesis 21:1-2**, "*And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.*"

Directly after this event, you can tell that there is great joy in the receiving of this new life. They are so overjoyed that they just had to laugh. In fact, because they laughed so much they named their son Isaac, which means "he laughs." Later on, there was a full feast celebration after Isaac had weaned from his mother. They were so overjoyed because of this promised son.

It's a good thing the story finally. Once again, there has never been a single promise that God has not fulfilled, or will forget to fulfill.

## *God, You Provide— Genesis 22-25:11*

If we were writing this story, we might write, "*And they all lived happily ever after...*" once Isaac was born— that perhaps this family was set in their faith, and that there was just a type of "spiritual costing" that took place where they would just enjoy God, He would enjoy them, and there were no more trials. But once again... that's only if we were writing the story, not God.

In the final portions of Abraham's life we find that the trials aren't done yet and actually, the test of his faith was going to be greater here than ever before. The question Abraham would face would be this: "Can I fully trust God? Or do I fully trust myself?" This is a question we all have to face, but most of us never reach the degree of trust that Abraham displays here.

In **Genesis 22:1-2**, we find these words, "*And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee*

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*into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”*

Attempts have been made to try and run through the emotional distress of Abraham here and give some sort of indication of how confused, hurt, challenged, shocked, and saddened Abraham might have been once this instruction was given, but I’ve never read or heard anything that could touch what it must have been like.

Surprisingly, the Bible is silent on this issue, and the next thing you read after God speaks to Abraham is that he rose up early in the morning to do exactly what God told him (Genesis 22:3). This should tell us something significant about the trust that had been cultivated in Abraham by God. There was no hesitation, there was no protest as there had been with Sodom and Gomorrah, there was only an immediate response of obedience.

As we follow the passage, other indications are given that tell us a great deal about his faith. In **Genesis 22:5** Abraham tells the other young men that are with he and his son to stay at a specific location while he and his son went to worship. He further said that they both would be return from the mountain. In **Genesis 22:7** when Isaac was finally piecing all of this together and realized that they did not have a “*traditional*” sacrifice, asked a gut wrenching question, “*but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?*” and Abraham’s response is stunningly optimistic in **verse 8**, “*And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.*”

And as the story continues just before Abraham was about to puncture his son with the knife, God stopped him and told him “... *Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*” (Genesis 22:12)

From this point, Abraham is suddenly directed toward a ram that was caught in the thicket and this became the substitutionary sacrifice for his son. Abraham immediately notices that this gift from God and right then and there declares God as “Jehovah-Jireh” “The LORD GOD Provides”. God truly had provided for Abraham, and in this moment of faith, it was formally recognized.

Once again, we come to a place where we feel like the story can end. In reading this portion of God’s word our emotions are running high, our hearts cry “hallelujah!”, as we sit satisfied at the story’s end. However, the story doesn’t end. There is one final portion to Abraham’s faith journey, and it has to do with his son.

As Abraham’s life is drawing to a close, his wife Sarah dies and his son, Isaac, is left motherless and is still not married. So Abraham sends out his most trusted servant to travel to his homeland and select a wife for him there rather than from the land of the Canaanites (Genesis 24:1-9).

With the conclusion of the narrative, Rebekah is selected and agrees to marry Isaac, God once again provides.

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### Summary:

### Discussion Points:

Discuss how each of these points are applied to this Biblical narrative:

- Deception is usually the first response whenever we sense danger.
- God promises that the blessings on His people will be both supernatural and eternal.
- God’s people are often impatient when it comes to waiting on God.

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- Always lean on God's promises when we don't want to wait.
- It is always better to trust God than to trust ourselves (**add a period**)

## *Chapter 7*

# It's All About the Change

Genesis 25:11-36:43

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Our focus for this section of Genesis is going to be on the person of Jacob; and to do that, we are going to move quickly past the person of Isaac. This is not to say that Isaac has a lesser significance, and therefore we can skip him; but it is to say that our focus in this portion of Genesis should be on the creation of the promised nation God gave to Abraham. And if this is where our focus is, then it is Jacob we need to center on because it is through him that a significant leap is made in the forming of this promised nation.

**So**, if we're getting to Jacob from Isaac, we need to understand a few things that happened in the life of Isaac. We find that just like his father Abraham, Isaac's wife, Rebekah, also had trouble conceiving children. For years they tried to have a son, but still Rebekah remained barren. In so much that Isaac felt like the plan of God was threatened, and so he came before the Lord in prayer to remind God of His promise (Genesis 25:21). Immediately after this, God caused Rebekah to conceive, and this is when the narrative really begins to get interesting. Rebekah feels that there is a little bit of a war going on inside of her, and so this time, she goes to the LORD in prayer and asked what was happening to her and God told her that she had two sons and that two separate nations would come from them. In other words, they bargained for... twins!. God also tells her that against tradition, the older son would serve the younger (Genesis 25:22-23).

As the story unfolds, we are eventually introduced to two little boys— one named Esau, and one named Jacob. Esau, we find was a red-haired, hairy mess, and Jacob was a heel-grabbing troublemaker; and oddly enough these are characteristics that would identify their personalities and personal relationship with each other well into their adulthood. However, perhaps it is not so odd when we realize that their parents did not help this situation much since each parent was brash enough to select a “favorite” child. Rebekah selected Jacob to love more, and Isaac selected Esau to love more. Any parent reading this should immediately note the danger that this can create in the life of their family and this becomes more and more obvious as this narrative continues (Genesis 25:24-28). From verse 28, we are taken directly to what appears to be the young adulthood of these two brothers. We can safely assume many things at this point: We can assume that these two men had learned about God. We can assume that these two men had learned about God's promise to them about their future heritage. We can also assume that they knew each other very well (as brothers tend to do). And this is what causes this next scene in the narrative— a multilevel scheme for Jacob to inherit Esau's birthright and inheritance. Jacob, as we can tell from this situation, cared about spiritual things. He cared about blessing. He cared about what God would do through his family. He cared about the promise that one day he would rule over Esau— which his mother no doubt had told him about. And this is what caused a couple of ambitious moves in his life. He wanted a blessing so bad he could taste it; and as far as he was concerned, Jacob thought knew exactly how to get it. So let's see what Jacob's ambitions lead to and what we might learn from his life.

### *When God Isn't In It, You Can't Change It— Genesis 25:29-27:46*

This is where we learn that Jacob first has his eye on Esau's birthright. He knew what kind of man his brother had grown to be. He knew that Esau didn't really care for spiritual things. He knew that all his brother really cared about at this point was hunting and being outside; and so Jacob capitalizes on this brother's hunger to see if he could secure a 'birthright victory.'

Once again, Jacob knew exactly what the birthright meant. He thought that if he could pull this off that it would settle the question of who would carry on the promised seed. Jacob was trying to take on himself, the changing of the birthright from Esau's hands to his instead of leaving this up to God.

In verses 29-34 we see how Jacob planned on doing this. Jacob made some food and wouldn't you know, he was done at just the time his brother came in from a day of being out in the wilderness. Obviously, once Esau came in and smelled the food, his stomach let him know and he asks Jacob for some.

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Everything was going according to plan for Jacob. Food... check. Hungry brother... check. Now comes the exchange. Once Esau asks for the food, Jacob tells him to sell his birthright first. Esau consents and the deed is done... Esau sells Jacob his birthright for a single meal.

It is important to stop right here for a moment and think about what just happened. This story (like many that we've seen) moves so quickly that you can hardly see any significance here— but what we're looking at is the ploy of one individual to change his path, be the master of his own destiny, and gain spiritual significance his own way. At the other end, we have another individual who could care less for spiritual things and sold his right to have any spiritual significance at all with a single meal.

If we are not careful, this can definitely happen to us. We can certainly be like Jacob and attempt to follow God on our own terms and make up what we believe to be spiritual or not. Or, we can be like Esau and stop caring for spiritual things altogether, so much so, that we lose any type of credible testimony and lasting legacy.

So here is Jacob; the new owner of a birthright. And here is Esau; the proud owner of a new kind of shame. But the story isn't over yet. Jacob had one more objective to complete— the securing of his father's primary blessing.

Once we get into chapter 26 we find that God renews his covenant with Isaac and prospers him financially despite several disputes over some wells in the land. After this, we find ourselves in chapter 27 and the clock has moved forward quite a bit and Isaac is now old and ready to give his sons his final blessing. As the oldest son, Esau was entitled to a double portion and the greatest honor of the blessing. And this is something that Jacob and his mother could not stomach.

Now, if deceiving your own brother is bad, then deceiving your own partially senile, hard of hearing, and mostly blind father is multiple times worse. But this is exactly what happens when Isaac wants to bless Esau.

Rebekah overheard this conversation and actually came up with a plan to steal Esau's blessing and they are successful. Rebekah wanted to secure the Messianic line for her favorite son, and does exactly this; however it did not come without its cost. Once Esau discovers what had happened, he immediately wanted to kill Jacob. Rebekah then comes to the rescue again convinces Isaac to send Jacob away to find a wife in Paddan-aram, but really this is an attempt to get Jacob to 'lie low' for a while so his brother can cool down a little bit.

### *Before God Uses You, He First Changes You— Genesis 28:10-32:21*

All of the pushing, all of the pulling, all of the deceit, all of successful trickery to get everything he ever wanted, and suddenly he's on the run for his life. Someone once said, "You can get what you want, but you might lose what you had." is true in Jacob's case. He got what he wanted, but the cost was substantial. He would have to live with the fact that the very last act toward his father, on his death bed, was a lie he told instead of the words "I love you, dad." He would have to live with the fact that when he was sent away, that this was the last time he would actually see his mother. He would have to live with the fact that he had absolutely wounded his brother, in so much that Esau literally wanted to kill him. Good job Jacob. Little did he know also that this little move was going to cost him years of his life when met his dear old, uncle Laban.

Did God make a promise to Jacob? Yes. Did that give Jacob the right to make sure that promise was kept? No. Jacob had to learn the hard way that if God isn't in what you are doing, then there is nothing that is going to make it happen. God would bless Jacob, but it was going to be on His terms, not Jacob's.

**So** as we approach God actually working in Jacob's life, we are going to see God doing a lot of ground work in order to prepare him. Jacob thought he could just be what God wanted him to be on His own. God, however,

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works on His own terms. And before anyone is used of God, there is a change that must take place. And that is what this section of Jacob's life is all about. This section starts out with Jacob on the run, and while he is resting for the evening, Jacob has a special dream. Here, for the first time, God confronts Jacob directly. At this point I believe it is important to notice what God didn't say. God never rebukes Jacob for his actions. God never tells Jacob what he must change in himself. God simply lays out line by line His promise to Jacob (Genesis 28:10-15). This is the beginning of the change in Jacob's life. However, the rest of the journey to get to where God wanted him to be was not going to be easy. In fact, Jacob was going to face some of the hardest years of his life. Jacob would spend 20 years of his life in service to a man that Jacob discovers was just as deceitful and manipulative as he was. God often gives us a taste of our own medicine when He's looking to change our lives. He lets us see who we really are. If we fast forward through the narrative we find that Jacob ends up with two wives (Leah and Rachel— both daughters of Uncle Laban), he had multiple children, and had accumulated a tremendous amount of wealth (most of which he cheated his father-in-law out of) before God finally gave instruction to leave that area and go back to his homeland. *When God Changes You, You know It— Genesis 32:22-32*

Jacob obeys God, and this is where the pivot of change begins. Suddenly, we find Jacob in prayer to God before reuniting with his brother Esau after 20 years. You would think that this was a sufficient time to get over a wrong done to you, but Jacob isn't convinced and this causes him to pray. This is the first prayer we see from Jacob and it is an absolutely beautiful one. It is a prayer of protection before he meets Esau:

“And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.” Genesis 32:9-12

It's amazing what a little faith and a little trouble can do for our prayer life. It can put us exactly where we need to be— directly in the hands of God.

That very night, in the black stillness, God comes to Jacob once more. Remember, the last time Jacob met the Lord was 20 years before while he was running away from the promised land, and now God comes to him again as he is moving toward the promised land.

However, this time, it's a little different meeting. You see, God didn't come in a peaceful dream, this time, God, in the form of a man starts a wrestling match with Jacob; and it lasts from the middle of the night until just before dawn. This was the fight of Jacob's life. You see, Jacob was used to always coming out the winner of all of his encounters. He had beaten his brother. He had beaten his father. He had eventually beaten his uncle Laban. But in this match, Jacob was severely outmatched. God put Jacob's thigh out of socket and he literally couldn't fight anymore. Now, all that he had left to do, was to cling on to his “Heavenly Assailant.” After this event Jacob had no question as to who should be the Master of his life— God was to be his New and only Master.

We also see from Jacob that along with his changing life, Jacob was beginning to have a new hunger despite his pain. He refused to let God go. If we can rewind a bit, his first attempt to obtain God's blessing on his life was through deceit. Now, he wants God blessing by struggling, asking, and refusing to let go. This was something in his life that he realized that only God could do.



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But here comes the question in **verse 27**, “*And he said unto him, What is thy name*” *And he said, Jacob.*”

What this means is that Jacob’s old nature was going to be a problem— and so God makes some undeniable changes in his life:

- 1) God gives Jacob a New Name— Verse 28 “And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (God Prevails): for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”
- 2) God gives Jacob a New Story— Verse 29-30 “And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that you dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel (Facing God): for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”
- 3) God gives Jacob a fresh start— Verse 31a “And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him...”
- 4) God gives Jacob a New Reminder— Verse 31b “... and he halted upon his thigh.”

Jacob had no question in his mind if God met with him and if he had been changed. And just like Jacob, we know when God has changed us. There is a real, literal difference in us that we are fully aware of. But we should not be the only ones. Because as we look a little closer in the life of Jacob, we find one final major truth.

### *When God Changes You, Others Should See It— Genesis 33:1-36:40*

In this section we see Jacob finally meeting Esau. Part of Jacob’s reconciliation with God was to also reconcile with his brother, and this is exactly what happens. And notice how it happens: we see that Jacob has a new found courage. The first part of Genesis 33:3 says, “*And he passed over before them...*” There was no hiding, shifting, or avoiding. Jacob came directly to his brother. We also see that Jacob came with a new humility. In the second part of verse 3 we read “*...and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.*” As we continue reading you find that Jacob gave his brother generous gifts, Esau then warmly embraces his brother and accepts him, and the hate-filled brother of chapter 27 is now a reconciled one in chapter 33.

Though the rest of this sections covers a scandalous rape of his only daughter, his sons (Simeon and Levi) murdering all involved, a false god dilemma because of Rachel, and ending with Esau’s genealogy account in chapter 36. In all of these narratives where Jacob is mention, we can tell that there is an extreme regard for righteousness and everyone around him can see it.



## *Chapter 8*

# Dream Land to God's Plan

Genesis 37-50

There are not many passages in the Bible that set the tone of the narrative or passage as forcefully as this one. After just a couple of verses telling us where Jacob was living and some brief background information in **verse 2 of chapter 37**, we read these words in **verse 3**, “*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colors.*” We have already seen the strife that this can cause, and here we are again— a perpetual cycle of spiritual and psychological damage caused by a parent who feels the need to pick a favorite child.

This is how we are introduced to young Joseph— he was the favorite son of Jacob. And what makes this worse is the fact that Scripture is telling us that this was not something secretly hidden in the heart of Jacob, this was something that was obvious to the family. They weren't just suspicious of it, they had evidence for it. **Verse 4** tells us that they physically watched this special affection take place between their father and Joseph; and they watched so much of it that they began to hate Joseph, “*And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.*”

This is how the tone of this narrative starts— it starts with hate. A hatred spurred by the envy and jealousy of nine older brothers toward their younger brother, Joseph. And so when Joseph is first given his call of greatness by God, this only spells trouble for him.

### *I Have a Dream— Genesis 37:5-11*

Joseph said, “I have a dream!” And he did. God gave him a dream— actually a couple of them. In the first dream we find out that Joseph had a dream about sheaves, and one set of sheaves (which were his brothers), bowed before his sheaves. And then, we see that he had a second dream. In this the second dream, Joseph begins to tell about how he observed that the luminaries in the sky bowed before him.

Now, understand, the problem here is not the fact that Joseph had a couple of dreams. The problem is that he actually began telling his family about them, including his brothers, who had already started to hate him. And so, as you can imagine, the dreams did not help matters much whenever they realized that there were having to pay respect to him. Next time you find someone who really hates you, tell them that you had a dream that they were paying respect, and bowing before you and see how well that works out.

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However, we might wonder what would have happened if Joseph would have just thought quietly about these dreams, or simply lit a candle late at night and began to write these dreams down in a journal somewhere. Would things have turned out differently?

We might also wonder what Joseph's motives were in revealing these dreams to his family. Why would he even say such a thing? Was he simply excited about God's plan? Was he simply trying to verbalize what God had revealed to him regarding the future of his family? Or was he your typical 17 year-old who just couldn't help himself?

I personally believe that this conversation came out of Joseph's heart, and that he truly understood that God had a plan for his life. But this sense of direction and enthusiasm is something his brother's could not stand.

There is something important here, I think. We should really beware if we cannot rejoice in the prosperity and direction of others in our lives.

### *This is Not What I Thought— Genesis 37:12- 41:*

Don't misunderstand this. If God has revealed a path for your life, that is truly wonderful. But what God often does not include is the path it takes to get there. I happen to believe that if God revealed exactly what His plans were to us from the very beginning, many of us would have abandoned ship long before we even got started.

But to be God's vessel, you have to be refined God's way. There is a process— a way— that God uses to make an individual his masterpiece.

That said, if you experience confusion, heart-ache, pain, suffering, betrayal, loss, or fear, I want you to take heart, because you're in good company. It's really easy for us to peer into our situations and try to pair them up with God's promises and think, "This is not what I thought." "This is not what I think of when I think of God's blessing in my life." It's about at this point that you may become confused when you read or remember verses like **Romans 8:28**, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.*" In the confusion of a circumstance, this verse is quoted almost like a battle cry among some Christians who think that if they can just love God enough, then He will eventually turn out something that they think is "good" for them. It's as if the "undesirable experience" that has come into their life is to be endured simply for endurance sake, until God finally breaks through with the 'good' that is supposed to come out of it. But the question is, what is the good that all things work together for whenever life isn't going quite like you thought it was supposed to? Well that is found in the verse right below, "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son....*" (vs. 29) Now this gives us the full picture. The 'good' that all things work together for, is to be 'conformed into the image of Christ.' It is to that end that we have hope. Despite what is going on in our lives, God is using it to conform us, or mold us, into the very image of Christ. And I have to tell you, you're not going to have a greater good come from your life than God shaping you to look like Himself, so that you can be the most effective vessel for His glory that you possibly can be.

And that is what we begin to see in the life of Joseph— God was beginning to mold him.

As his narrative unfolds, it all starts by his father, Jacob, asking Joseph to go check on his brothers and on the flocks. **Verse 14** says, "*And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Schechem.*"

As we find in the the following verses, Joseph's brothers see Joseph well before he is within earshot of them, and their hearts immediately fill with envy and anger simply by just looking at him. They begin verbally expressing

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their hatred. In fact, this hatred is so uncontrollable, that as they were speaking, they weren't satisfied with simply feeling an emotion, they needed to do something about it, permanently. They looked at Joseph, they remembered his dreams, and they saw his coat. Everything about Joseph reminded them about their father's favoritism and their own insecurities. Now, what were they going to do about it?

The plan at first was to kill him; but eventually the consensus is to sell him to some of the nomadic Ishmaelite people who happened to be passing by in that area. So a deal is struck for twenty pieces of silver and away the 17 year-old Joseph is taken. He is taken by a people whom he doesn't know, and into a land he doesn't know, and now is forced into a way of life he doesn't know as a human slave.

What did Joseph think about his dreams now? Joseph did have a promise from God by way of a dream, but this dream seemed to be more of a nightmare at this point. How in the world does this fit in to God's plan?

**Chapter 39**— Despite the traumatic experience we've just left, by the time we enter into chapter 39, everything seems to be going as well as could be expected. Joseph has a good job, he has a good testimony, he has learned the value of hard work and responsibility. In fact, he is so successful that the master of the house, Potiphar, made him ruler of all his possessions. This is not a bad gig considering that Potiphar was an officer (or official) of Pharaoh's court. But still, there is this waiting game. This looked like a waste of time. Once again, what do we do about God's plan? What about the dream? This could not have been anywhere near what Joseph thought, when he thought about God's plan being fulfilled in his life. Where is the good that can come out of this slave life, even if this particular area of slavery happened to be a good one?

To make matters more confusing, Joseph's life as he knew it, again, was about to come to a screeching halt as Potiphar's wife becomes more pronounced in the story. She begins to make several sexual advances on Joseph, of which Joseph promptly and concisely refuses every single time. And instead of simply getting the point, she eventually, after he last advance, feels the need to accuse Joseph of attempted rape which lands him in prison.

And this is where chapter 39 ends. It ends with Joseph in prison, but once again finding favor with those placed over him.

**Chapter 40**— As we get into chapter 40, Joseph proves to be so dependable, even in the small things, that he was given charge over all of the prisoners, and had even made a couple of friends while he was in there. These men, one the chief baker, and the other the chief butler, had in some way made Pharaoh angry. Obviously, we can imagine how upset and timid these men would be about their condition, but they became even more upset once they were both troubled by dreams that each of them had.

Well dreams just happened to be Joseph's specialty. Joseph told these men that if they told him about their dreams that they were so upset about, then he would pray to God for the interpretation and tell them what these dreams meant. Joseph only has bad news for the Baker, but good news to the Butler, and asks that when he gets out of prison and is restored, to not forget what Joseph had done for him and plead his case of a wrongful accusation before Pharaoh.

Sadly though, the Butler is restored, but completely forgets about Joseph. As a result, Joseph is still stuck in jail for an offense he did not commit. You can hear the questions again can't you? Where is God in all of this? How is this helping? What about God's promise? Has God forgotten about me? Though we don't read anything like this from Joseph's life, we certainly know that he didn't want to be where he was, else he wouldn't have asked the Butler to remember to plead his case. The fact is, every temptation was there to feel resentment, anger, bitterness, self-pity and any other negative emotion that we want to throw in there. For two more years, there is plenty of time for Joseph to think about all of this.

**Chapter 41**— However, as we move to the next chapter, we find that Pharaoh himself has a dream. Pharaoh is so troubled by this dream that everyone begins to hear about it— including our Butler who suddenly remembered what he was supposed to do two years ago.

This brings about a rapid turn of events. Joseph is suddenly brought before Pharaoh and asked about his ability. Joseph tells Pharaoh that he actually has not power, but that anything he receives, he received of God, and from there, God reveals the meaning of the dream to Joseph. Suddenly, after the course of a single conversation, Joseph is set up as second in command in the most powerful kingdom in the world at the time.

### *I See it Now— Genesis 42-50*

When we first meet Joseph, we meet him at the tender age of 17. Now, as the second in command of the nation of Egypt, he is 30. Thirteen years have passed in order for Joseph's life to finally make sense.

This becomes immediately obvious after we see that these final chapters have to do with several trips made by Joseph's brothers, traveling from Canaan to Egypt in order to buy grain because of the massive famine that struck all the lands in the area. But because of God's inside information to Joseph by way of Pharaoh's dream, Egypt was more than ready for this event. These chapters build and build before Joseph finally reveals himself to his brothers, reconciles with them, and is given a final chance to be with his father after all of this time. In chapter 37, Joseph is sent to go see his brothers. By the time we reach chapter 42, Joseph's brothers are instructed to go see him.

If this was our story, we can easily think of all kinds of clever ways to get back at his brothers. If this was a Greek play, I'm sure the audience would have expected a just reward for the thirteen years stolen from Joseph. And so as anticipation builds, as we're waiting for revenge, we suddenly find that Joseph's response was more powerful and cut more deeply to the heart than anything else he could have done— he reconciles with them.

In fact, Joseph's response is such a shock to his brothers that they can hardly believe it. They fully expected to be judged for what they had done. And this is when we start to learn something very significant about Joseph's outlook in response to his brother's surprise after everything was said and done. He tells them in **50:19** “... *Fear not, for am I in the place of God?* He continues in **verse 20**, “*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*”

Joseph said, “I see it now.” He finally realized everything that he had gone through completely had a purpose. God had not forgotten him and was very much in control the entire time. Joseph was going to lead, but it was going to be in God's time and in God's way. God had to first give Joseph a make-over before he was to sit in the place that God had for him.

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**Summary:** There is an important phrase to follow all throughout Joseph's life, and those are the words, “But the LORD was with Joseph...” Circumstances can't do much to an individual who recognizes God's power and presence is always with them. Now, this doesn't mean that we go through life emotionless and untouched by our circumstances, but it does mean that God can use all of it to bring about his purpose and that we can trust in Him for it to that end.

We might still be waiting for answers in light of God's promises that seem to be far, far in the distance. We may look around and say, “That's not what I thought.” But according to the Bible, there will be a day, in this life or

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the next, when we say, “I see it now... It all makes sense... and God you were getting glory the entire time.” The story of Joseph provides us a powerful example of God’s complete sovereignty over all of human history and that no matter what we face, God can always be trusted.

### **Discussion Points:**

Discuss how each of these points are applied to this Biblical narrative:

- A Mature Faith does not lose sight of God’s Promises.
- Never Losing Sight of God’s Promises means Never Losing sight of God’s Word.
- A Mature Faith knows how to use both current circumstances and past circumstances as an advantage for the future.
- God does not work the way that man thinks He should work.