



## THE CREATOR WHO CARES

Genesis 1:1

The Bible begins, not with an argument for God's existence, but with a simple statement that God is the Creator of the universe. This simple yet wondrous declaration sets the stage for the rest of God's inspired revelation in the Bible, the source of true wisdom from above.

I want to welcome you as we set sail through God's Word. We are about to embark on a journey together that will take us through all sixty-six books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. And since the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we are really beginning a journey into God's wisdom for our lives. That is why we call this adventure, *The Wisdom Journey*.

When I was growing up, my parents decided I should take piano lessons—maybe your parents did the same thing. Maybe by now you have forgiven them for that! Actually, if you are like me, you can still play a tune or two on the piano. I remember that I wanted to learn little tunes that were popular and well known, but my teacher focused on the fundamentals like scales, and timing, and rhythm, along with the correct hand placement on the keys. She had this long pencil, and she would tap my hands with it if I dropped my hands down or flattened out my fingers. She wanted me to learn the basics. She knew that if I did not learn those foundational skills, I would never be able to play more complicated pieces of music.

Well, the Bible begins the same way—with basic and foundational truths. None of the Bible is going to make much sense without beginning at the beginning. It is right here in the very first verse. And beloved, if

you believe and commit your faith to Genesis 1:1, the rest of the Bible—especially those more complicated sections—will fall into place.

So, here is the opening declaration, and it is one of the most profound statements in all of human history:



Babylonian boundary marker depicts chaos creature in the depths among the pillars that support the earth.



“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Now these words are more than just an introduction to the Bible; they introduce us to the Author of the Bible—in fact, the Creator of the universe, the sovereign Lord over all creation.

The name for God used here is *Elohim*. This name emphasizes the power, majesty, and sovereignty of God above all gods. Interestingly, *Elohim* is a plural Hebrew noun, and that gives a subtle hint to the complex unity of God, which we understand as a Trinity, a triune God. He is one God in three Persons.

The very next verse tells us that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters, and the New Testament reveals that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was the person of the Godhead who spoke the universe into being.

The apostle Paul, writing in Colossians 1:16, says, “By him [Jesus Christ] all things were created, in heaven and on earth ... all things were created through him.” Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, was the actual member of the Godhead who did the speaking. He said, “Let there be light!” And there was light.

So, from the very opening lines of the Bible, we see the involvement of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This foundational truth—that the triune God literally created all that is—is going to shape our understanding of everything else in Scripture.

*Faith allows  
us to grasp  
what our finite  
minds cannot  
comprehend.*

Did you notice how the Bible begins here by simply announcing, “In the beginning, God.” It does not start with a detailed argument for God’s existence. It does

not give you ten explanations or evidences of His eternal existence. It simply declares, “Here He is.

Whether you believe it or not, God exists, and He created everything.” This is a simple statement of fact, and that demands your trust in His Word.

The writer of Hebrews affirms this when he writes, “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God” (Hebrews 11:3). In other words, faith allows us to grasp what our finite minds cannot comprehend—that God created everything. In fact, the Hebrew word here for “created” is describing creation from nothing.

As humans, we can create a lot of things, but we have to start with materials already made. But God, in His infinite power and wisdom, created everything from nothing. The heavens, the earth, and all matter that exists were spoken into existence at His command.

Psalms 90:2 says,

*Before the mountains were  
brought forth, or ever you had  
formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting  
you are God.*

God’s act of creation literally marks the beginning of time as we know it, but God Himself exists outside of time. He is eternal, without beginning or end.

Now, this opening announcement—that God created the universe—does not just tell us what God did; it tells us who He is—our Creator, who is sovereign over all. Follow me here: if God created the universe, then the universe rightly belongs to Him. He can do as He pleases with it. His sovereign claim over the universe extends to everything, including the planets and stars, the animals, the weather, and of course, you and me.

I believe this is the primary reason why so many people want to believe in any theory out there, rather than God being the Creator. People intuitively realize that if God is their Creator, then He deserves their surrender.

For you and me, this understanding of God’s sover-



eighty brings us great comfort. The one who created the universe is in control of the universe. Nothing happens outside of His will and purpose. When your life feels chaotic and overwhelming, you can trust that God is on His throne, governing the world He created.

I wonder if your life, at this moment, is experiencing some new difficulty or perhaps your heart is filled right now with grief or trouble. It might be over relationships, or children, or grandchildren, or your health, or your finances. It feels like you are carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. You might be wondering how much longer you can carry it all.

Let me remind you that your creator God is a caring God. He knows your burdens, He sees your struggles, and He knows your pain. If you can believe Genesis 1:1, that God is your Creator, then you can believe 1 Peter 5:7, which says you can cast “all your anxieties [your burdens] on him, because he cares for you.” What a promise. If God can hold the world in His hands, He can hold your burdens as well.

Someone once said that grief is love with nowhere to go. You do not know where to take it. Who can share it or understand it? Beloved, there is somewhere to take your grief—take it to God. The God who created the universe created your heart, and He understands your pain. He is big enough to handle your sorrow, your anger, your questions, and your doubts.

In fact, God invites us to bring our grief to Him. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 34:18, “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” God is not distant or detached; He is a Creator who cares about you.

I have a little wooden plaque in my study at home that I inherited from my dad’s study when he passed away at the age of ninety-two. My dad was a great man of faith who never seemed to get discouraged with all the trials and challenges he faced. That plaque says, “God

doesn’t give us what we can handle. He helps us handle what we’ve been given.”

So, this opening verse in the Bible is not just an introduction to a story; it is an invitation to trust your Creator—to trust in His power, His wisdom, and His love. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” is the foundation of our faith. It is the starting point for everything we believe as Christians.

So, as we continue on this journey through Scripture, let us hold fast to this foundational truth. And while we are at it, let us rejoice that God is the Creator who cares about you and me.

---

How are you seeking to know God more deeply?

How does knowing God is the Creator of all things affect your priorities in life?

Why is it so critical to acknowledge that God is all-powerful?

---



Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THE FIRST FIVE DAYS OF HISTORY

Genesis 1:2-22

The first five days of creation reveal God's power, creativity, glory, and design. They show us that God is very big and we are very little. And yet, His creation also reminds us of His loving care for each one of us.

President Teddy Roosevelt was a big man, both in stature and personality. He would often surprise guests who came to the White House by inviting them out onto the White House lawn after dark to gaze up at the stars. Sometimes, he would even lie down on the grass and invite them to do the same so they could take in the grandeur of the night sky. After a while, Roosevelt would stand up, brush himself off, and say to his guests, "Well, I believe we are small enough now. Let's retire for the evening."

Beloved, when you consider the vastness of creation, gaze up at that starry sky, or perhaps look at photographs taken from outer space, our creator God becomes very big, and we human beings become very

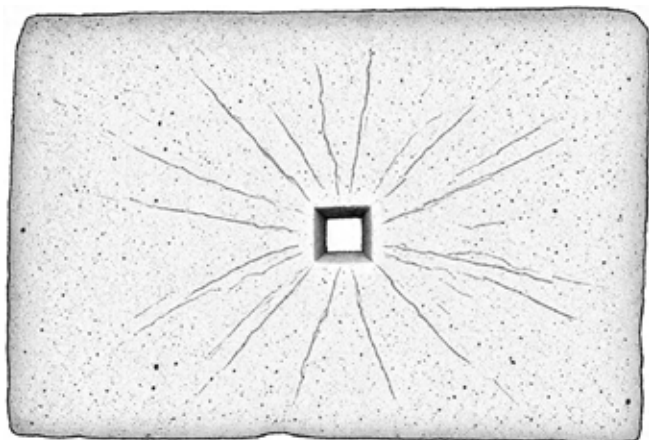
small. That sense of awe and reverence is the best way to approach Genesis 1. As we set sail into this chapter, we are going to follow the first five days of Creation—the first five days of recorded history.

But before we dive into the details, I want to make a point about Hebrew grammar. I know that does not sound exciting, but it is critical to understanding what happened. When you look at the grammar and structure of this passage, what you find is a series of sequential events—one event following another.

Maybe you learned that little children's poem about Jack and Jill:

*Jack and Jill went up the hill  
To fetch a pail of water;  
Jack fell down and broke his crown,  
And Jill came tumbling after.*

This poem describes consecutive events: Jack and Jill go up the hill, then Jack falls down, and Jill tumbles down after him. You would never imagine the poet intended us to believe that Jack fell down, and then a week later—or ten years later—Jill came tumbling down the hill. No, the poet is giving us a clear, sequential order to the events.



This ancient grinding stone is believed to be inscribed with the creation myth known as the Memphite Theology





Likewise, the Hebrew language presents the creation account as a series of sequential events. We repeatedly see the phrase, “And God said”—in verses 3, 6, 9, and so on. That little word “and” is called a consecutive conjunction. It is understood to mean, “And then . . . and then.” So, this passage is clearly describing a sequence of events—one event followed immediately by the next event. In other words, the Poet—in this case, God—never intended us to believe that millions of years passed between these events.

Some people suggest the days of creation are metaphors for long periods of time—perhaps millions of years each. It is as if God knew somebody would come up with that idea, so He further described each day with a specific pattern. Here in verse 5, we read, “There was evening and there was morning, the first day.” Verse 8 says, “There was evening and there was morning, the second day.” This expression is clearly indicating a literal, twenty-four-hour cycle.

One more note here: when a numeral is attached to each day—“the *first* day,” “the *second* day,” and so on—that is even stronger language to emphasize that these were literal days. In fact, beloved, in the Hebrew Bible, whenever the word *day* is attached to a numerical adjective, it always refers to a twenty-four-hour period.

All that to say, God could not have made it any clearer.

When you read this account, and take what God says at face value, the conclusion you come to is that God created the universe in six literal days. That is one staggering miracle upon another. But maybe the greatest miracle is not that God created everything in six days but that He patiently took six days to do it. He could have done it all in an instant!

### Day One: Light and Darkness

Now beginning at verse 3, we read this:

*And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called*

*the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.* (verses 3-5)

This light was not from the sun; the sun will not be created until the fourth day. This light was the manifestation of God’s glory, illuminating the universe. This marked the beginning of His creative handiwork.

*This manifestation  
of God’s glory marks  
the beginning of His  
creative handiwork.*

### Day Two: The Sky and the Waters

On the second day, God created the sky by separating the waters above from the waters below (verses 6-8). The sky, or the “expanse,” served as a division between the waters, creating the atmosphere we now live in. This separation laid the groundwork for life that would soon inhabit the earth.

### Day Three: Land, Seas, and Vegetation

On the third day (verses 9-13), God created the dry land and gathered the waters into seas. He called the dry land “Earth,” and the gathered waters He called “Seas” (verses 9-10). But God did not stop there. He also caused vegetation to sprout from the earth—plants yielding seeds and trees already bearing fruit. Do not miss this perfect timing, beloved.

This was a crucial day in creation, as the land and vegetation would provide the necessary resources for the life-forms God would create in the coming days. The earth was now a place teeming with resources, ready to sustain life.

### Day Four: The Sun, Moon, and Stars

On the fourth day, God created the sun, moon, and stars to govern the day and night, to mark seasons, days, and years, and to give light to the earth (verses 14-19). The creation of these celestial bodies was vi-



tal for the rhythms of life that would follow. The sun would provide warmth and energy, the moon would influence the tides, and the stars would serve as markers in the night sky.

It is important to note that while the light created on the first day was a revelation of God's glory, the lights created on this fourth day were physical objects that will govern the day and night.

### Day Five: Birds and Sea Creatures

On the fifth day (verses 20-23), God filled the waters with living creatures and the sky with birds. The seas, which had been created on the third day, now teemed with life. I have read that we have discovered less than 10 percent of the animals that live in the ocean.

God blessed these creatures, commanding them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth" (verse 22). This is the very first blessing recorded in the Bible, and it sets the stage for the abundance of life that now fills the earth.

I am going to pause here at the end of day 5 because our entire lesson next time is devoted to the creation of Adam and Eve.

But let me just say this as we reach this point: Genesis 1 reveals an amazing Creator. This chapter makes God really big, and it makes you and me very small. But that is not a bad thing at all. In fact, a big creator God is exactly the kind of God we need. He is the source of our strength and purpose for our lives today.

A crew of astronauts paid tribute to God one evening. It was Christmas Eve, December 24, 1968, when the crew of Apollo 8 made history by becoming the first humans to orbit the moon. During their historic orbit, Bill Anders, Jim Lovell, and Frank Borman delivered a live television broadcast to Earth. In their address, they read Genesis 1:1-10. Their message was heard by roughly one billion people across sixty-four countries.

You and I will likely never experience a trip around the moon. At least not until the rapture takes place. But wherever you are today, give glory to God, your powerful and magnificent Creator.

And even though you might be feeling rather small, this great God created you, and He cares deeply for you.

---

What does God's creation of the universe tell you about your worth in God's eyes?

What does the Genesis creation account tell you about God?  
Why is this important?

Why is it important to your daily walk with God for you to believe that God's account of creation is true?

---



Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THE CREATION OF ADAM

Genesis 1:24–2:17

Many today diminish human dignity by viewing humanity as essentially the evolutionary result of a fortunate “accident.” The Bible presents a picture of human beings as divinely and uniquely created with the capacity to know, worship, and serve God with purpose.

A computer security engineer in Australia was in love with the girl of his dreams. Over the course of three years, he meticulously planned a proposal that would express his love in the most memorable and thoughtful way possible.

He created a scavenger hunt using clues from a smartphone app he designed himself. The hunt took his beloved on a journey through all their favorite places, each stop revealing a new clue. The final destination was a restaurant with a breathtaking view, where she was instructed to unstitch one of her favorite childhood teddy bears. Inside the bear, she found a message that read, “Will you marry me?” She said yes! And he had placed that message inside the teddy bear three years earlier! <sup>1</sup>

Now, if someone can go to such great lengths to express his love, how much more does our creator God, who loved us from eternity past, want to show us how valued and cherished we are?

Well, as we set sail again in the book of Genesis, we’re going to focus on the creation of the first man, whose name was Adam. Both Genesis 1 and 2 give us a detailed picture of how God went to great lengths to create and to cherish His creative handiwork.

Before we drop anchor here, I want to clear up a com-

mon criticism of the Bible. Many skeptics claim the accounts in these two chapters are contradictory. It is understandable to feel confused when comparing chapters 1 and 2, as they seem to deliver different accounts. But these chapters do not contradict one another; they complement each other with two different perspectives.

Chapter 1 gives a broad, structured overview of God’s creative work during six literal days. It emphasizes the order and timing of His creative power. It is like looking at creation through a wide-angle lens, showing the entire universe coming into being, one step at a time.

*These chapters  
complement each  
other with two  
different perspectives.*

Genesis 2 begins by telling us that God rested on the seventh day. That signifies the completion and perfection of His creative work and sets a divine pattern for



rest and reflection. It also establishes the principle of Sabbath rest, inviting humanity to pause, honor God, and find renewal in Him. We are also told in verses 4–6 that God watered the earth with a mist instead of with rain at that time. That will be significant later when we come to the flood.

But the bulk of chapter 2 is dedicated to zooming in on the creation of humanity, offering more details about Adam and Eve, the first man and woman. It shows us God's purpose for them and their unique relationship with Him. Like the four Gospels in the New Testament, which taken together provide the fullest picture of Jesus' life and earthly ministry, so Genesis 1 and 2 together paint the full picture of creation—the broad strokes of sweeping power as God creates the universe and then the careful brushstrokes as God creates Adam and Eve.

Verses 24 and 25 of Genesis 1 record God's creation of land animals on the sixth day. This is followed in

verse 26 by this profound statement that same day: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" This is a pivotal moment in the creation narrative. The language changes to let us know that mankind is unique in God's creation.

The details are elaborated in Genesis 2:7, where we read this:

*Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*

There are two key words in Genesis 1:26 that deserve closer inspection. And by the way, when you study the Word of God, you are actually studying the words of God, words He inspired through His servants. And words matter!

So God says in verse 26, "Let us make man in our image." The Hebrew word for "image" refers to a shadow or representation. Imagine standing with your back to the sun and holding up an object, say a hammer, in your hand. The shadow on the ground is not the hammer, but it points to the presence of a hammer nearby.

God also says, "Let us make man . . . after our likeness." "Likeness" further emphasizes this same idea. In the Hebrew language, it means resemblance. So, humanity was created to resemble God. How? Well, mankind is created with moral reason, self-awareness, and most of all, a spiritual capacity for worship—these all reflect God's character.

This is important because it sets humanity apart from all other created beings. We are not just a higher form of animals. Animals were not made in God's image or likeness. Humanity's unique creation and status mean we have the capacity for a personal relationship with God.

Let me put it this way: God's intention was for Adam and Eve—and you me—to live in such a way that when others observe our lives, they see a resemblance to our loving, caring Creator. Our lives are meant to reflect God's presence to the world around us.



The Egyptian god Khnum was believed to have fashioned the pharaoh on his potter's wheel





God did not create Adam and Eve just to exist; He gave them a purpose. Again, in verse 26, God establishes this order, saying, “Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth.” Adam and Eve were given the responsibility to rule over and care for God’s creation, serving essentially as the king and queen of Planet Earth. Their subjects were the animal kingdom, and Genesis 2:15 adds, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”

His authority in Eden was a reflection of God’s sovereign rule over everything. Adam and Eve eventually sinned, ruining their royal dominion, but it is important to remember that God’s original intention was for them to live in a magnificent state of royal authority and harmony with all creation.

So, it is before sin entered the world that Adam was told here in verse 15 to “work” in the garden and “keep it.” The verb “work” means to labor or serve. It is the same Hebrew verb used to describe serving God in worship.

Beloved, this elevates your job today. No matter how meaningless and mundane it might feel, it is to be something sacred. Work was not a result of the fall; it was an original part of God’s perfect design for humanity. The word *vocation* means “calling.” Your vocation is God’s sacred calling for you. That should transform the way you view your job. Whether you are teaching, cleaning, repairing, or caring for others, you are fulfilling your sacred calling.

God also gave Adam and Eve a moral compass. They were created as free moral agents. They were not robots. They were given the freedom to obey or disobey God.

Genesis 2:8-9 describes two significant trees in the garden: the Tree of Life, symbolizing eternal life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God’s command in verses 16-17 is clear:

*You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.*

Of course, God already knew what they would do. In fact, He had already mapped out the plan of redemption, and we will see that plan come to pass on our Wisdom Journey, through the sacrifice and death of God the Son.

Now let me spell out three lessons you can take away from Genesis 1 and 2.

First, work with excellence and integrity. Your job is your sacred calling from God.

Second, trust that God knows what is best for you. So, ask Him for wisdom in making wise and godly choices in life.

Third, remember you are loved and cherished by the God who created you. He has a purpose for your life, and He invites you to walk with Him every step of the way.

---

Why is it important for you to live each day bearing God’s image in your community?

What are some of the obstacles you face as you try to “represent” God in your workplace?

How does believing God is the creator of the universe affect your attitude towards those workplace obstacles?

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrew Ramadge, “Sydney Man Prepares Australia’s Most Romantic and Hi-tech Marriage Proposal,” NewsComAu, November 25, 2010.





## HERE COMES THE BRIDE

Genesis 2:18-25

Marriage was not created *by* people but *for* people. God designed it to fulfill His purposes and give fulfillment to His creation. We cannot truly appreciate marriage without appreciating and following the principles God established in His Word to govern it.

**W**e're looking again at the sixth day of creation. So far, God has filled the oceans with marine life and the universe with galaxies. Grass and trees are covering the ground, and cattle and all kinds of critters, including dinosaurs, are grazing on a miraculously mature earth.

Now according to Romans 5:12, before sin entered the world, there was no death—death came as a result of sin.

This means none of the animals here are carnivorous. There's no death and therefore no killing for food at

this point. The fall of Adam into sin will change a million things about God's original creation.

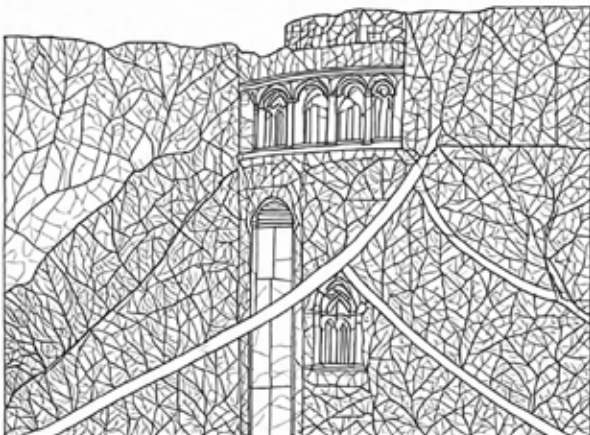
Well, then, how did that T-Rex survive on grass? The same way an elephant does. But what about all those sharp teeth that are obviously used in ripping the meat off bones? They're no different from the sharp teeth of the panda bear, who eats bamboo and leaves.

As the Holy Spirit communicates it to him, Moses is writing down God's eyewitness account of creation—and He was the only eyewitness there. And according to God's account, the original animal kingdom wasn't killing and eating each other. And that's good news for Adam because none of the animals are going to be wanting to eat him either.

Now the details of Day 6 are given to us in the second chapter of Genesis, where Adam has been taking in the wonders of his new home. And here in verse 18, God announces on this sixth day, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

After each day of creation, God always said, "It was good." Now, for the first time, He says, "It is not good."

Adam had figured that out too. According to verses 19 and 20, God had brought to Adam all the beasts



This stone panel depicts Ashurbanipal's garden park with waters flowing through it and a prominently featured shrine



of the field and the birds of the sky—the original pairs of each family or species—and Adam named them all. But verse 20 tells us that “for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.”

In other words, God created animals male and female. Adam has observed their basic anatomy and design and complementary roles. And he’s suddenly aware that he’s missing his female counterpart. The Hebrew expression for “a helper fit for him” can be translated, “one who complements.”

Now, you might expect God to scoop up another handful of dirt like he did in creating Adam. But God does something absolutely beautiful and unexpected.

Look at verses 21-22:

*So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.*

God didn’t use a handful of dirt this time. Maybe He wanted the woman to smell better! She probably did, but that’s not why God chose this method. I believe God wanted to show Adam (and us) that she was to be a companion, one who comes alongside her husband.

She wasn’t formed from his feet to be trampled on, or from his head to be his leader, but from his side.

Now can you imagine this moment when God introduces Eve to Adam? I don’t know what Adam first said when he saw her, but the Hebrew word probably sounded a lot like *shazzam!*

We’re not told everything about this first encounter, but eventually Adam makes a speech here in verse 23. In fact, these are the first recorded words ever spoken in human history. Adam says, “This at last is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.”

I love that: “At last—finally—there’s a companion, a counterpart who fits *me*.”

Adam exercises headship by naming her. He says, “She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

God is creating something else here besides the woman. He’s introducing the first couple—the first union, our first parents. This was the creation of the institution of marriage and family.

Marriage, which is the union of a man and a woman, isn’t man’s idea, but God’s. This wasn’t man’s creation; this was God’s creation.

A male and a female—a husband and a wife—this isn’t a social construct we’ve made up or somebody’s preference. This was God’s plan and His design for marriage from this time forward and throughout the human race.

And let me show you three principles here that make marriage a blessing, in any nation and in any culture.

*First is the principle of priority.*

God says in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother.”

A man leaves his father and mother. Now this isn’t telling the man to never speak to his parents again. He might not want them on his honeymoon, but he’s not supposed to ignore them.

*This was God’s plan  
and His design for  
marriage.*

God is referring here to priority. The couple are to develop their own direction in following the Lord’s leading. The responsibility of the wife is now to her husband, and the husband gives *priority* to his wife over every other relationship.

*Second is the principle of permanency.*

Verse 24 goes on to say that a man shall not only leave his father and mother but also “hold fast to his wife.” To hold fast, or “to cleave,” literally means “to cling to; to stick to.” It could even be translated “to weld together.”

The principle of permanency means you’re going to take your hand off the back door and throw away the key. If your marriage has a fire escape, there’s going to come a time when you’ll run for it rather than help put out the fire.

*Third is the principle of unity.*

Verse 24 wraps up by saying, “They shall become one flesh.” This idea of one flesh not only involves sexual intimacy, but also spiritual, emotional, and mental unity. It involves two people going in the same direction for the same reasons.

Now that doesn’t mean you’re going to think alike. My wife and I have been married for forty years, and I still can’t read her mind. And I still can’t get her to think like me. Even after all these years, we’re different from each other. And that’s a good thing because I certainly don’t need to be married to someone like me.

I had a man tell me one time after church that he and his wife were so different that the only thing they had in common was that they were both married on the same day.

Well, in spite of the challenges, the Bible, in 1 Peter 3, directs the husband to live with his wife in an understanding way and the wife to submit to her husband. These two directives are actually impossible for either spouse to fulfill perfectly. Can a husband perfectly understand his wife? No. Can a wife perfectly submit to her husband? No. And that’s where the Lord comes in. As we demonstrate our allegiance to Him, He enables us to express His love to each other.

Genesis chapter 2 is God’s original manual on marriage. These aren’t suggestions; these are descriptions of a godly marriage, marked by the principles of priority, permanency, and unity.

So, if you’re married today, make a fresh commitment to walk with God, who created you. Make a fresh commitment to encourage your spouse’s relationship with the Lord. And as a couple, make a daily commitment to walk with the God who created you for each other—for better or for worse (hey, you’re going to have both), for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, as long as you both shall live!

---

What is your ideal for marriage, and how does it compare with God’s ideal?

How can you better encourage your spouse’s relationship with the Lord?

---



Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)







## FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Genesis 3:1-6

How can people living in a perfect environment so easily give in to temptation? We have to give credit to the great tempter, Satan. His temptation was subtle and its execution flawless. We do well to take note of his devices that are on display in Genesis 3.

We've discovered thus far, in our Wisdom Journey, that God created all that is, including the Garden of Eden—a beautiful, peaceful paradise.

Have you ever wondered why the world *we* exist in is anything but a peaceful paradise? Why didn't we inherit the garden of Eden from Adam and Eve?

The answer is found in Genesis 3, one of the most tragic chapters in human history.

In verse 1 we read, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made.” This particular serpent doesn't need any introduction. He just shows up in the garden when Eve is evidently alone.

We're told here that he's “crafty.” The Hebrew word means “sly” and “cunning.” My friend, you give him the key to your back door, and he'll soon own your house, and you'll be out on the curb.

Now keep in mind this temptation is going to take place when Eve has perfect living conditions: peace with God, a wonderful marriage to Adam, and amazing harmony with the creation that surrounds her. This is Paradise!

Listen, nobody who chooses to sin can claim it's be-

cause they lack some advantage, whether it's a nice house, a good education, the right family, or a positive environment. They can't argue that if life were easier or better, they wouldn't have chosen a life of sin.

Look at Eve! She has *everything* going for her, yet she's going to rebel against her loving Creator, God.

*Eve has everything  
going for her, yet  
she's going to rebel  
against her loving  
Creator, God.*

Frankly, none of us is any match for Satan. We're never too big to be deceived. That's why the apostle Paul warns us not to be ignorant of Satan's tempting devices (2 Corinthians 2:11).

So, let's watch and learn as Satan makes five strategic moves in tempting Eve with forbidden fruit.



First, *Satan shows up in a form that disarms Eve.*

He shows up in the Garden, possessing a serpent. Verse 1 uses the ordinary Hebrew word for snake. Just remember, before sin entered the world, there was no need to fear animals. The relationship between animals and humans was harmonious, not dangerous.

And Eve doesn't seem to be surprised by a talking serpent, which implies that before sin entered the world, some animals may have been able to communicate. But Satan is possessing this serpent, and he's in control of the conversation here with Eve.

Second, *he raises doubt in Eve's mind.*

We read in verse 1, "[Satan] said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?"'" In other words, "Did God really say that this one little tree is off limits? Isn't that a little strange, Eve? What's wrong with one little tree? Did God literally say that?"

Satan has been casting doubt on God's word ever since.

Eve replies in verse 2:

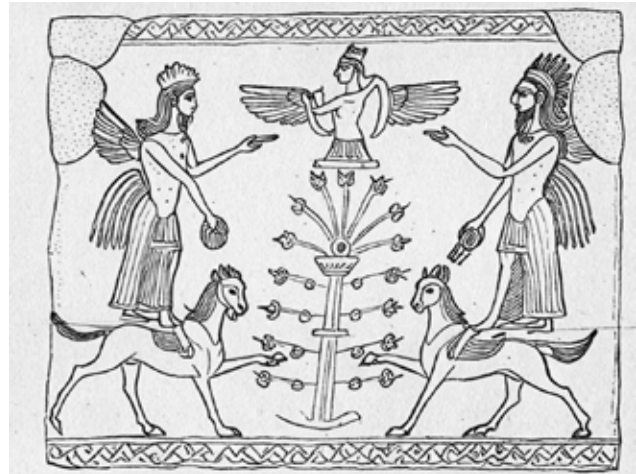
*"We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*

In other words, "Yes, that's what God said!"

By the way, it's not recorded for us that God directly told Eve about this tree. We *do* know God gave Adam this warning in Genesis 2:17, *before* Eve was created. Passing this restriction on to Eve was part of Adam's spiritual leadership, and Eve had heard it from Adam.

And she was evidently a good listener—unlike most husbands—because she basically quotes back to Satan what Adam told her God had said.

Now there are some who say Eve exaggerated God's command and showed disrespect to His word to Adam by adding that they weren't allowed to touch the tree.



This cylinder seal depicts a sun god hovering above a sacred tree

God had not forbidden *touching* the tree.

But I personally believe Adam added that precaution, not to disrespect God's word, but to keep Eve as safe as possible: "Eve, don't eat from it; don't even get near it; don't even touch it." He loves her and doesn't want to lose her, and he certainly doesn't want her to die.

Satan's strategy of raising doubt in Eve's mind about God's word doesn't work.

So, Satan follows that up with a third strategic move; *now he outright denies any danger to Eve.*

In verse 4, Satan says, "You will not surely die." In other words, "What do you mean, you're going to die? Do you really think after all the trouble God went through to create you, He's going to get rid of you? You're not going to die."

And if he can, the serpent is smiling with a reassuring smile.

God said back in Genesis 2:17 eat from it, and *you shall surely die*. Satan says in chapter 3 verse 4 eat of it, and *you will not surely die*.

And in case you're wondering, God always tells the truth and Satan never does. He's the Father of lies (John 8:44).

But again, Eve stands her ground and doesn't reach for the fruit.

So, Satan takes a fourth strategic step in this temptation—and this one works. *He accuses God of being unfair to Eve.*



In verse 5, Satan says, “*God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened.*”

“Oh, listen, Eve, God’s being selfish; He’s not playing fair; He’s not as good to you as He could be. He’s holding back.”

How many have listened to that temptation? The tempter might be whispering in your mind these days that God is keeping something good from you; He’s not playing fair; He would do more for you if He really cared about you.

Those are all lies, straight out of the garden of Eden.

Satan moves quickly to take his fifth and final step in deceiving Eve; *he promises her that sin will bring fulfillment.*

He tells her in verse 5, “You will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

What’s his appeal? “You’ll be right up there with God, just as wise and discerning as He is. You’ll be able to distinguish between good and evil; you’ll know everything God knows; you’ll be independent and free to think and act on your own.”

At this point, Eve steps forward to take a closer look. The Bible sadly records what happens:

*When the woman saw that the tree was good for food* [this was the physical lure], *and that it was a delight to the eyes* [this was the emotional lure], *and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise* [that was the intellectual lure], *she took of its fruit and ate.* (verse 6)

Did she become like God? No, she became like Satan, who himself had tried to become like God earlier.

And then she turns to her husband, who evidently just showed up, and *she* becomes the tempter, in essence saying, “Adam, eat this.” In other words, let’s be independent of God together.

The Bible records in verse 6, “She also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”

And the sound of them chewing on that fruit has echoed all the way down through human history to this very moment.

Let’s do what we want to do with our own lives. If it looks good, if it feels good, if it looks satisfying, let’s eat our fill of sin whenever we want. Let’s act independently of God and His Word and His warning.

And the result? Adam and Eve will soon learn they’ve lost their special communion with God, they’ve lost their innocence, and they’ve even lost their unity in marriage.

Did they become as wise as God? No. Were they immediately and completely fulfilled? No. Now they were empty.

They gained nothing by sin, and neither do we.

Because of the impact of that original sin, we will never be able to enjoy what Adam and Eve lost—not now, not ever—unless something happens. And that something will happen, as we will see as our Wisdom Journey continues.

---

How can you better equip yourself to resist temptation? Particularly, how should you deal with doubts Satan tries to raise?

Do you ever find yourself assuming you are safe from Satan’s attacks? What attitude should you take?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## LOSING THE LEGACY

Genesis 3:7-9

The devil promises there is much to be gained by sin. However, sin always brings loss, both for us and for those around us, and no amount of self-effort can reverse that. The sad legacy of Adam and Eve offers warning to us but also the assurance that God has not given up on us.

Today we're going to look at the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin against God. We'll simply call this the immediate results of a spoiled legacy. And those results have affected us to this very day, because we're just like the first couple—sinners in need of a Redeemer.

The first thing I want you to know is that *Adam and Eve experienced the loss of their original splendor.*

Now in our last study in Genesis chapter 3, we learned how Eve fell for Satan's schemes. She ate the forbidden fruit and then tempted her husband to sin as well. And while eventually they would die physically as a result, some other things immediately changed.

Verse 7 tells us, "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked."

Now what many people have done with this text is

make Adam and Eve suddenly blush with embarrassment that they're not wearing any clothes. Well, they've known that for some time already.

Do you know what happened when Moses met with God on the mountaintop? There in the presence of God's glory, Moses' face began to glow. He didn't have a mirror up there on Mount Sinai, so he wasn't even aware of it.

But when Moses came down that mountain, the people couldn't bear to look at him because of the glow. So, Moses had to wear a veil over his face whenever he went out in public according to Exodus 34.

Adam and Eve were created in the presence of God's glory. They walked with God in the cool of the evening. Genesis 3:8 indicates they had daily, personal exposure to God's glory.

Imagine their daily exposure to the glory of God. If the face of Moses shone, can you imagine the physical brilliance of Adam and Eve?

The prophet Daniel says that one day the redeemed will shine like the brightness of the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3). Is he exaggerating?

Zechariah 9:16 says God's people shall one day sparkle like the jewels of a crown in the coming kingdom of



Gold leaf tablet from the 14th-12th century shows winged creatures guarding a sacred tree





God. And Jesus promised in Matthew 13:43 that the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

There's no reason to ignore these promises or refuse to take them literally. The people of God will one day shine in their glorified bodies with the restored brilliance of God's original design.

God's going to turn the light back on, and the believer in heaven will shine with that light that was lost by Adam and Eve.

Now back here in the garden, as soon as Adam and Eve sin, God turns off the light. They lose their clothing of brilliant splendor, and they immediately know it. All of a sudden, they're standing there looking at each other in unadorned nakedness.

And they're ashamed. And since they can't turn the light back on, they try the next best thing. Adam and Eve perform the first religious act recorded in human history.

In Genesis 3:7 we read: "And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."

Let me make this the second consequence to their sin: *They experienced the frustration of self-effort.*

*Religion cannot  
silence internal  
shame. And that's  
because the issue  
isn't so much how  
you sin but who  
you've sinned  
against.*

They've lost their brilliant splendor. They're keenly aware of their unadorned, naked bodies, and they effectively try to cover over their guilty consciences.

This is religion's motivation all around the world. People are sewing fig leaves together, trying to cover over their sin with good deeds, penance, church or mosque observances, temple rituals, chants, songs, long prayers, and sacraments.

Let me tell you something: fig leaves do not work! They can't remove guilt. Religion cannot silence internal shame. And that's because the issue isn't so much how you sin but who you've sinned against. Only He has the cure for shame; you have to deal with your Creator.

Third, *Adam and Eve experienced the futility of trying to hide from God.*

Genesis 3:8 reads:

*And they heard the sound of the  
LORD God walking in the gar-  
den in the cool of the day, and  
the man and his wife hid them-  
selves from the presence of the  
LORD God among the trees of  
the garden.*

Can you imagine trying to run from God? Well, people do it every day. You can run from God, but you can't hide from God. There isn't a tree big enough.

Verse 9 says, "But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'"

God knew where they were; He knew what tree they were hiding behind; He knew Adam was now wearing a size 38 fig-leaf suit. He even knew how they were feeling and why they were hiding.

So why does God ask, "Where are you?"

God wants them to come to Him in open admission and honest confession. The apostle John writes, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

God had warned them back in Genesis 2:17, "In the day that you eat of it [the forbidden fruit] you shall



surely die.” And although Adam and Eve remained physically alive, they immediately died spiritually.

The apostle Paul tells us that spiritual death is now inherited by every human being since that original sin. This is part of our spoiled legacy. Paul writes in Romans 5:12:

*Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*

So, we can’t just blame Adam – we *all* sin, too.

Maybe you’re sitting in a coffee shop or office or at home and you’re hearing that quiet voice asking this same question: “Where are you?” Where are you in relation to God? Maybe you want to run from that question and hide. Maybe you’ve been trying to silence your shame and guilt through religion or good deeds.

No amount of *good* is *good enough*. That’s why that little voice you can’t turn off tells you that you’re guilty—the shame you feel is telling you something’s not right.

Keep listening. The words you are hearing are an invitation to stop hiding and start confessing your sin to God.

Let me point out two principles from this scene here in the garden of Eden.

The first principle is this: *God already knows the worst about you.*

In Hebrews 4:13, the Bible says, “No creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of [God].”

That verse makes a direct connection between Adam and Eve and you and me. We’re all naked and exposed.

None of us can hide from Him.

The God who created space, time, and matter knows everything that’s going on everywhere, all the time, in the light and the dark. He knows every thought you’ve ever had, every word you’ve ever spoken, every action you will ever take—He knows it all, already. That means God already knows the worst about your past and your future.

But here’s the second promise we can draw from this garden scene: *Even though God knows the worst about you, He will forgive you.*

When all seemed lost and without hope for Adam and Eve, the Creator came walking, seeking, asking, “Where are you?”

Jesus said, “[I] came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Are you lost? You’re just the person He’s looking for. He invites you to stop running, to stop hiding. Confess your sin to Him, “for God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

That’s part of God’s promise to Adam and Eve—the promise of a coming Redeemer. It’s a promise given even in the garden of Eden, as we will discover in our Wisdom Journey.

---

Are your acts of spiritual service means of honoring the Lord or attempts to earn God’s favor?

Does God’s knowledge of all you do, say, and think give you comfort or make you fearful? What does your response reveal about you?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## CONSEQUENCES

Genesis 3:10-13, 16-20

We cannot fulfill our purpose in life without understanding the human condition. And we cannot understand the human condition without understanding sin and its effects. The Bible clearly defines the consequences of sin—consequences we can overcome only by God’s grace.

Now in our last session, we watched as Adam and Eve, in defiance to God, ate the forbidden fruit in order to become like God, and now they’re hiding from God behind some trees in the garden.

But God comes calling. This is the beauty of God’s grace. Like His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, He comes to seek and to save those who are lost.

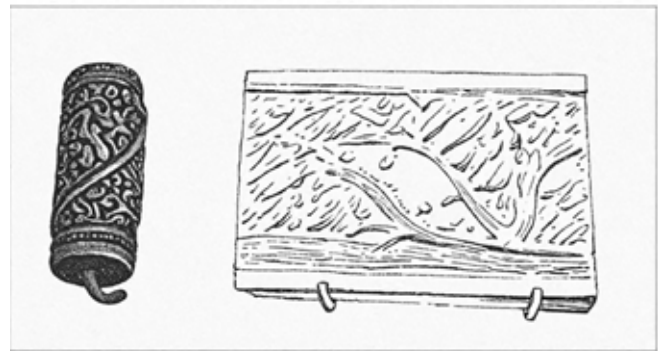
God knows where Adam and Eve are hiding, but He’s going to give them the opportunity to come out of hiding and confess their sin to Him. The problem is, they aren’t ready to confess anything. In fact, they’re going to keep on sinning.

And as a result, Adam and Eve experience five tragic losses in this garden scene.

*First, there is the loss of spiritual intimacy.*

When God calls out, “Where are you?” in verse 9, instead of coming clean, Adam says to God in verse 10, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

“I felt afraid, Lord!” Notice how Adam makes this all about how *he feels* rather than about his disobeying what *God had said*. We do the same thing today, don’t we? “Lord, I can’t help how I feel; this is what makes me happy.”



Cylinder seal depicting a deity attacking a serpentine monster

This is the first time the word *afraid* is heard in human history. Because of sin, instead of walking with God, Adam and Eve are now afraid of God. Spiritual intimacy is gone.

*Second, there is the loss of honest transparency.*

Listen to their conversation, beginning in verse 11: “[The Lord] said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’”

Of course, God knew the answer; He saw them take their first bite. He sees the fruit stains on Adam’s fingers, so to speak. He just wants Adam to admit it and confess it.

Verse 12 continues:



*The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

God has never been surrounded by so many innocent people! They’re not going to confess to anything!

Honest transparency has turned into deflection and excuse making and finger pointing.

*Third, there is the loss of marital unity.*

Eve blames the serpent, and Adam blames Eve—but not only Eve. Notice Adam says in verse 12, “the woman whom you gave to be with me.” “Lord, if You hadn’t given her to me, I wouldn’t be in this mess. So, God, it’s really *Your* fault; and then beyond You, it’s all *her* fault.”

Not only did it grieve the heart of God to hear Adam blame Him, but can you imagine what it did to the heart of Eve? I don’t think she would ever forget hearing Adam complain that God had given Eve to him to be his wife.

To this day, marriage is now the union of two sinners, and we’re just like Adam and Eve—blaming and excusing and pointing fingers.

Now God informs them of some additional challenges in life. In verse 16, God says to Eve, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children.”

So, every woman who’s had a child can go ahead and say, “Well, thanks a lot, Eve!”

Had it not been for sin, childbirth would have been free of pain, just as raising a child would have been. The delivery process through the training process would have been painless! Imagine raising a child without a sinful nature. There’s no such thing as the

terrible twos or temper tantrums. Had it not been for sin, you really would have parented without problems and even delivered babies without pain.

Pain in childbirth will be a lasting reminder that sin brings pain—sin hurts. God’s promise of this consequence has indeed come to pass.

God says something else to Eve here in verse 16: “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

Before sin entered the picture, Adam was a loving leader, and Eve was a submissive complement. It was perfect harmony. They were equal in essence but different in function and role. But because of sin and a fallen, selfish nature, God says marriage will become a tug-of-war.

Sin will cause a woman to have her desire rule the day—even when it’s contrary to her husband. But God says her husband will rule over her. In other words, the man is going to turn his loving headship into a proud dictatorship. So, while the woman will learn to manipulate and coerce, the man will learn to exploit and dominate. Their roles are now corrupted by their sinful nature.

And to this day, instead of *cooperation*, marriage can easily become competition.

*Marriage, becomes  
hard work—it  
takes effort and  
investment to  
regain what Adam  
and Eve lost.*

Marriage, like everything else in a fallen world, becomes hard work—it takes effort and investment to regain what Adam and Eve lost.

So where do we begin to climb out of the hole Adam and Eve started digging us into there in the garden?





Well, the answer is God's Word. The apostle Paul writes that a godly man will use his position as the head of the home to lovingly care for his wife, and the woman will use all her skills to complement and follow her husband (Ephesians 5:22-33).

It's going to take self-denying, self-sacrificing, self-giving love between a husband and a wife.

Now back in Genesis 3, another loss is mentioned.

*Fourth, there is the loss of nature's harmony.*

Now God turns to Adam and announces:

*Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.*

(verses 17-19)

Just as Eve can't deliver a child without suffering, Adam can't deliver food without toil.

Sin has affected the natural world. Every time Adam struggles to get crops out of the ground, he will be reminded of his rebellion against God.

God isn't trying to be mean to Adam and Eve. He's actually giving them reminders of their need to confess their sin and walk in humility and depend on Him through life.

*Fifth, there is the loss of physical immortality.*

At the end of verse 19 the Lord says to Adam, "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

God had warned Adam and Eve that if they ate of the forbidden fruit, they would die. That didn't mean that physically they would die *immediately*; it meant they would die *eventually*.

The Bible promises us, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). If you don't think you're a sinner, just ponder the fact that you are going to die.

During this Wisdom Journey, more than fifteen hundred people have died on Planet Earth. By the time you read this sentence, seven people will have died. The valley of the shadow of death looks like rush hour.

In the face of all these losses, what possible hope did Adam and Eve have? And what hope do we have today? The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death, *but* the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The only hope anyone has is related to a Redeemer; and God is about to reveal to Adam and Eve the promise of that coming Redeemer.

But that's for our next study.

---

Are you quick to confess your sin, or do you tend to offer excuses for it? How can you develop a more transparent relationship with the Lord?

What can you do to overcome the effects sin has on your relationships?

---





## THE CURSE AND THE CHERUBIM

Genesis 3:14-15; 21-24; 4:1

Because they disobeyed God, Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden of Eden, but they didn't leave without hope. Satan had won a battle, but the Lord assured them—and all who believe in Him—ultimate victory through the coming Redeemer.

Today we're coming to the end of Genesis chapter 3, where Adam and Eve are faced with the loss of everything they had enjoyed because of their sin against God. Paradise is lost, spiritual intimacy with God is lost, their future death is now certain, and Satan seems to have won the day.

But in the middle of all that is lost is a promise of all that will be restored. Let's go back to verse 14 as God speaks to the serpent and says, "On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life."

Now this seems to imply that snakes originally moved in some kind of upright manner, although we really don't know. There's much speculation as to why Satan decided to possess a snake in order to tempt Eve—and I'll tell you it's just a lot of speculation. But you can be sure that from then on, every time Adam and Eve saw a snake slither by them as they scratched out a living, they remembered the tempter and their sin.

Today, snakes are just normal members of the animal kingdom, even though I don't want one. There was a snake in my backyard the other day, and I didn't have any desire to get close to it.

God now speaks in verse 15, not to the serpent, but to Satan; and God delivers this incredible promise:

*I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*

This verse is called the *protoevangelium*. It is the *proto*, or first, *evangelium*—the first gospel announcement; and it means that a woman will deliver a Redeemer who will defeat the tempter.

Now Satan is told here that he will bruise the Redeemer's heel but the Redeemer will bruise Satan's head. The Hebrew word for bruise (*shuph*) means to seize or fall upon. Satan will sink his fangs into the heel of the Redeemer—and it will hurt. But it will only be temporary, for the Redeemer will fall on Satan's *head*.

If I wanted to kill that snake in my backyard, I wouldn't crush its tail; I would crush its head. So, Satan's ultimate defeat—the crushing of his head—is foretold in this gospel promise.

Now before God exiles Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, we're told in verse 21, "The LORD God



made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.”

This is the first death in God’s creation and the first act of atonement. The death of an animal is required to cover the guilt of Adam’s sin—the death of the innocent for the sin of the guilty.

*God’s covering of  
Adam and Eve  
pointed to the  
coming Redeemer  
who will become  
the final sacrifice  
for sin.*

Adam and Eve’s religious effort to cover their guilt with fig leaves was ineffective; frankly, God can see through fig leaves.

God’s covering of Adam and Eve pointed to the coming Redeemer who will become the final sacrifice for sin—the death of the innocent One for the sins of the world (1 John 2:2).

God is essentially teaching them that from now on, the only way to approach Him is through the blood of an atoning sacrifice.

So how do Adam and Eve respond to all this? Well, no doubt they’re dejected and sorrowful, but they believe in God’s plan of a coming Redeemer. And we know that because of the first verse in the next chapter, Genesis 4:1

*Now Adam knew Eve his wife,  
and she conceived and bore Cain,  
saying, “I have gotten a man  
with the help of the LORD.”*

Here’s Eve in the delivery room, praising God for giving her a son.

And more than that, she names him Cain, which can mean “to acquire.” It has the idea of saying, “He’s here—he’s arrived.” Many biblical scholars are convinced she’s referring to the promised Redeemer, and she believes Cain is that Redeemer.

Of course, he isn’t. Cain won’t be the Redeemer; in fact, he will become a murderer.

But for now, the good news is that Adam and Eve are looking for the promised offspring of the woman who will become mankind’s full and final Redeemer.

Now back in chapter 3, Adam and Eve are ushered out of the garden of Eden lest they eat of the Tree of Life and essentially live forever as sinners (verses 22-23). They had walked with God in the cool of the evening, but verse 24 tells us God now puts on guard duty outside the garden cherubim with a flaming sword.



Libation vase of king Gudea from 2100 b.c.



We're not told how long these warrior angels were to guard the garden gate, so to speak. They may have remained there until the flood of Noah wiped mankind from the face of the earth in Genesis 7. After the flood and the reshaping of the topography of the earth's surface, the garden of Eden and these angels were gone.

But let me tell you, the cherubim weren't forgotten. In fact, God didn't want mankind to forget what they represented as guardians of the very presence of God.

Centuries later when God gave Moses directions for the construction of the tabernacle, at its center was the Holy of Holies, the place of God's special presence. A heavy curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the outer area, and in Exodus 26 God ordered that into the fabric of this curtain was to be woven the figures of cherubim. As such, they are pictured as still guarding the presence of God. And the only way into His presence was through blood atonement.

Centuries later, the glorious temple was built by Solomon in Jerusalem. And once again, cherubim were sewn into the thick veil hanging in front of the Holy of Holies. Even the doors of the temple sanctuary had cherubim carved into the wood.

Only one man could enter the Holy of Holies, and that was the high priest. Once a year, he would slip behind that curtain embroidered with cherubim; and once inside the Holy of Holies, he would face the ark of the covenant directly in front of him—a golden box containing the law of Moses.

And he would immediately be awestruck by the golden cherubim that stood above that golden box as if they were hovering above it—their wings of gold designed so that they reached forward and touched each other (Exodus 25). They were still guarding the presence of God.

The high priest would sprinkle the blood of the inno-

cent animal sacrifice on the lid of that box, which was called the mercy seat, and God would temporarily be satisfied with the covering of the sins of the nation. It was temporary because the blood of animals could never secure eternal forgiveness.

The sacrifices all pointed to a future sacrifice when a wooden altar called a cross would hold the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus, who would die and forever pay the penalty for sin.

When the Lord cried from His cross, "It is finished," the promise delivered to Adam and Eve thousands of years earlier finally was realized. Yes, Satan bruised the Redeemer's heel on the cross where He suffered, but Christ crushed the serpent's head in victory.

And what happened as soon as Jesus uttered those words, "It is finished"? Matthew 27 tells us that at that very moment, the veil embroidered with cherubim that hung in the restored temple nearby was torn open, from top to bottom.

This is the victory of our Redeemer who now gives us access into the very throne room of our creator God. The cherubim no longer stand in the way.

Beloved, you can do better than that high priest could ever do. You can walk right past that veil; right past those cherubim to the very throne of God anytime you want—day or night—as a believer in His Son, your victorious, Satan-crushing, sin-forgiving Messiah, Mediator, and Savior.

---

What personal warnings and what encouragement do you find in the experience of Adam and Eve?

What does it mean to you to have direct access to the presence of God?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)







## A TALE OF TWO SONS

Genesis 4:1-8

Adam and Eve's son Cain was determined to do things his way, not God's way. The result was tragic—disappointment, envy, anger, and murder. Cain's life warns us of the consequences of sin; the experience of his brother, Abel, reminds us of the cost of godliness.

We now arrive in our Wisdom Journey at Genesis chapter 4, where the descendants of Adam and Eve are beginning to make their way onto the pages of human history. And I have to tell you, it isn't going to be a pretty sight.

As we noted last time, Genesis 4 opens well enough in the delivery room. Verse 1 reads, "Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.'"

And it isn't long before Eve is back in the delivery room. Verse 2, says, "And again, she bore his brother Abel."

This verse goes on to tell us these two boys grew up and chose different occupations. Cain became a farmer, and Abel became a rancher. Both of these are wonderful occupations. Indeed, none of us would survive if it weren't for ranchers and farmers.

Now keep in mind, these boys grew up outside the garden, fully aware of their parents' history and fully aware of God's system of atoning sacrifice.

We know that because of what verse 3 tells us:

*In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of [produce], and Abel also*

*brought of the firstborn of his flock [of sheep].*

The phrase "in the course of time" literally means "at the end of days." This refers to the end of the year, meaning this sacrifice was an annual event.<sup>1</sup>

God had taught them the way to approach Him through this annual sacrifice of atonement. Now we're not given Cain and Abel's homeschool curriculum, but they didn't come up with this idea on their own—piling stones on top of each other, killing some innocent animal, and burning it on the altar.

This was God's idea. This was God's plan. This annual sacrifice was mankind's statement of faith in God's plan of redemption through a sacrifice; it was their declaration of faith in a coming Redeemer.



Cain and Abel plaque from the 11th century a.d.



So here come Cain and Abel, no doubt along with their parents, Adam and Eve, showing up to make this annual sacrifice.

We're not told, but I believe this altar had been set up decades earlier on the eastern side of the garden of Eden, in the presence of those cherubim who were still standing there with the flaming sword, reminding them of their exile and the need for atonement.

But this year something different happens. When the family arrives, Cain does something terribly and defiantly wrong. He offers a non-bloody sacrifice of fruit and vegetables from his own labor on the farm. Abel, however, offers a lamb as God had prescribed—an innocent sacrifice, dying for the guilty sinner.

And God doesn't waste any time responding: "The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard" (verses 4-5). As a result, "Cain was very angry, and his face fell."

Now most people believe Cain wasn't treated fairly by God. I mean, how unlucky was he to go into farming while his brother got into livestock, and—wouldn't you know it—God preferred animal offerings over vegetables.

But that's not the issue here. If you study the details recorded in the first five chapters of Genesis regarding the age of Adam and his sons, you will find that Cain is around 120 years old when this event occurs.

Before the flood, our forefathers lived in these early years of a pristine, newly created earth for hundreds of years. In fact, Genesis 5:5 tells us Adam lived 930 years. That's a lot of candles on your birthday cake! So, Cain and Abel are relatively young men, even though here they are in their early hundreds.

I point this out because it indicates that Cain and Abel have offered this annual sacrifice perhaps a hundred times already. But this time Cain says to himself, "You know, I'm tired of getting animals from my brother. My work is just as significant to God, and I'm working just as hard as he is. This year I'm going to do this my way."

Let me tell you, the serpent hadn't gone on vacation for the past hundred years. He's going to use the same strategy he used on Cain's mother.

"Did God really say that? C'mon, this is right for you. You've done it a hundred times God's way; now it's time to do it your way. God will appreciate the fact that you came this year to sacrifice from the hard work of your hands. God isn't closed-minded!"

But Moses writes, "The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard" (verses 4-5).

*The problem is,  
you can't get to God  
your way. In fact,  
the door to God's  
house is locked,  
and there's only  
one key that will  
open it.*

God *regarded* Abel's sacrifice. The writer of Hebrews puts it this way: "God [was] commending him by accepting his gifts" (Hebrews 11:4). This can be translated, "God testified over his gifts."

In other words, God did something annually to demonstrate His acceptance of these offerings. We're not told specifically how God expressed His acceptance, but other passages fill in the blank.

Throughout the Old Testament, God demonstrated visibly His acceptance of the sacrifice and the worshiper with fire from heaven.

- When God accepted Aaron's sacrifice in Leviticus 9, He sent fire from heaven and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering.
- God accepted Gideon's sacrifice in Judges 6 by sending fire down to consume it.



- When Elijah and the priests of Baal put their faith on trial, the false god Baal didn't respond, but God did. He testified to His servant Elijah by sending fire from heaven to consume his offering (1 Kings 18).
- When King David offered a sacrifice to God in 1 Chronicles 21, God answered him by sending fire from heaven upon the altar.
- When Solomon later dedicated the temple in 2 Chronicles 7, the Bible says that fire came down from heaven and consumed every sacrifice.

Fire from heaven was God's testimony of accepting the offering.

Year after year as Adam and Eve came to the edge of the garden, along with their sons, and gave their offerings on that altar, the Lord testified His approval by sending fire from heaven, consuming their offerings.

This year, however, Cain's offering remains untouched. No fire falls. This is total humiliation and public embarrassment. That old serpent probably whispered in Cain's heart, "God is playing favorites. You're just as good as Abel."

And with that, the envy in Cain's heart begins to burn to the point that before that year was out, Cain murdered his younger brother, Abel. And Abel became the first follower of God to be martyred for his faith.

And to this day, beloved, the world can be divided, like these two brothers, between those who follow their own way and those who follow God's way.

Over in the New Testament letter of Jude, false religion is categorically referred to as "the way of Cain" (Jude 11). It says, "I'm going to come to God my own way, and I'm going to avoid all this talk about sin and guilt and sacrifice and the need for a Savior. I will bring to

God what I've done with my own hands."

The problem is, you can't get to God *your* way. In fact, the door to God's house is locked, and there's only one key that will open it.

That key is in the shape of a cross—the cross of Christ, who became the final sacrifice for sin. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

When you place your faith in Christ alone, that doorway into heaven is unlocked, and you're able to enter into a personal relationship with God through Christ, as a forgiven child of God, on your way to heaven forever.

---

Cain's initial sin involved the nature of his worship. What do you need to examine in your heart with regard to your worship of the Lord?

What aspects of Cain's character do you see in your own life? What qualities of Abel do you find in your life? How can you nurture the latter?

---



<sup>1</sup>Thomas Manton, By Faith: Sermons on Hebrews 11 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 115.

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THE ORIGINAL FAMILY TREE

Genesis 4:9–5:32

One simple truth has not changed since sin entered the human race: there are only two paths in life. We choose either to humbly follow the Lord by faith or go our own sinful way. Cain and Seth illustrate the significant impact our choice can have on generations to come.

In Genesis chapters 4 and 5, the family tree of humanity is beginning to develop into two separate branches.

To this day, there are these same two branches of people, so to speak—people who obey God and people who defy God; people who follow God’s plan and people who choose their own plan.

Here in Genesis we find the origin of these two branches. One descends from Cain, and the other descends from Seth.

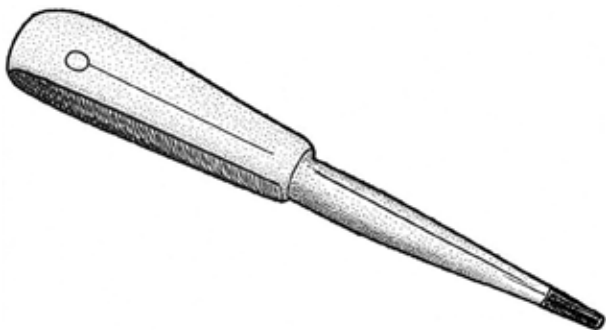
After Cain killed his younger brother, Abel, Cain was confronted by God for his sin. Genesis chapter 4 and verse 15 tells us God put a *mark* of some sort on Cain to protect him from being murdered himself. We’re not told what that mark was, but in God’s mercy,

Cain was allowed to stay alive.

However, as verse 16 says, Cain decides to live apart from God’s presence. And then we’re told in verse 17 that Cain takes a wife. People are quick to ask me where Cain got his wife. The obvious answer is that Cain either married his sister or another close relative born to one of his sisters or brothers. Genesis 5:4 tells us Adam and Eve had many sons and daughters besides Cain and Abel.

Now keep in mind that the absence of genetic diseases in this early, post-creation world made the marriages of close relatives much safer from disabilities. Abraham will marry his half-sister (Genesis 20), Isaac will marry the daughter of his cousin (Genesis 24), and Jacob will marry two of his cousins—Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29). It won’t be until Moses delivers the law, some two thousand years later, that God will forbid the marriage of close relatives.

Now maybe you’re wondering how many sisters or cousins Cain would have had to choose from. Well, remember, in these early years people lived very long lives. In fact, Genesis 5:3 tells us Adam and Eve have a baby when Adam is 130 years old. Let me tell you, we had our last child when I was in my late thirties, and I didn’t have any energy left then. I can’t imagine being 130.



Copper and bone awl from the fourth millennium b.c.





Well, if couples are having children for decades, the original family tree literally would have produced thousands of brothers and sisters and cousins and nephews and nieces and on and on.

*Solomon and David and every other believer who disobeyed God's original design for marriage ended up paying a high price for their sinful choices.*

By the way, when the world's population is destroyed in the great flood later in the Genesis account, all that's left are Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives. And God tells them to repopulate the earth. And who was available for Noah's grandchildren to marry? Brothers and sisters and a whole lot of cousins.

So, why did the law of Moses forbid the practice of marrying close relatives? It was primarily for physical safety. We know now that genetic mutations shared by both parents create physical deformity and illness—literally, a weakening of the gene pool, so to speak. Genetic scientists are alarmed by the increasing number of defects growing within the human gene pool today.

Beloved, when the Bible says mankind will “wax worse and worse,” as the old King James Version puts it (2 Timothy 3:13), I don't think that's just moral digression. I think it includes moral, mental, physical, and even genetic digression—growing worse and worse.

Now, back here in Genesis 4, the family line of Cain is listed for us, and at any point that line could have begun to follow after God. God doesn't put a time limit on His mercy. But Cain and his family line continue to choose to live apart from God.

Cain has a son, and he names him Enoch (verse 17). This isn't the godly Enoch of chapter 5—we'll get to him later. Cain's son, Enoch, has his own son, and he names him Irad (pronounced Eerod), which means “wild donkey.”

This wild, stubborn donkey of a man has a son and names him Mehujael, meaning “God is combative.” In other words, “I'm at war with God.” He has a son named Lamech, which means “overthrower.”

Lamech grows up to be a proud, cruel man; in fact, in verse 19 he becomes the first person mentioned in the Bible as being a polygamist—he took two wives. This is a practice that's going to bring jealousy, division, and heartache into the lives of many families.

Somebody says, “But King David and Solomon and others took multiple wives. And David is even called a man after God's heart.” Well, let me tell you, just because we seek after God doesn't mean we we'll never sin against Him.

Solomon and David and every other believer who disobeyed God's original design for marriage ended up paying a high price for their sinful choices.

Now here in Genesis chapter 4 and verse 25 all the way through chapter 5 and verse 32, we're given the second branch of Adam's descendants. This is the godly line of Seth.

In Genesis 4:25 we read this:

*And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel.”*

The name Seth means “compensation” or “appointed.” Eve feels compensated for the loss of Abel, who



was murdered by his older brother, Cain. But she also believes Seth is appointed by God for something special, and indeed he is.

In fact, through the influence of Seth, we're told in verse 26 that "people began to call upon the name of the LORD." They begin to organize together in some fashion to worship God.

Now the line of Seth is recorded down through the middle of chapter 5, where we're introduced to an unusual individual. Verse 21 says, "When Enoch had lived 65 years, he fathered Methuselah."

At the age of sixty-five, when most people are thinking of settling down, Enoch is starting a family. He and his wife name their first child Methuselah. His name has prophetic significance; it refers to coming judgment. Methuselah's birth changes Enoch's life. In fact, we're told in verse 22 that Enoch began walking with God after his son was born. Maybe you have a similar testimony—the birth of your child made you get right with God.

The New Testament letter of Jude tells us that Enoch preached a warning to everyone that judgment from God was coming (Jude 14-15).

Evidently, Enoch has been given revelation from God that the death of his son Methuselah will trigger God's judgment. And by the way, Methuselah will live longer than any other human being has ever lived—969 years verse 27 tells us. That's another way of showing God is slow to judge—His mercy is long-suffering.

Now verse 25 tells us Methuselah grew up, and he had a son named Lamech. Lamech grew up and had a son named Noah. Biblical history reveals that the year Methuselah died, his grandson Noah finished building the ark, and the judgment of God came—a global flood, just as God had promised.

God's promises always come true. God also has

promised a final judgment in the future, and 2 Peter 3 tells us it will not be by water but by fire.

Did the people listen to Enoch as he preached all those years? Did they get nervous as they watched Methuselah get older and older? Is the world listening to God's warning today? Well, I'm not really wondering about the world; I'm wondering about you. Are you listening to the word of God?

One day God's mercy will end; safety is found only in His Son, Jesus Christ.

My friend, you can be saved from eternal judgment by trusting in Jesus Christ and asking Him to become your personal Lord and Savior. That will put you in God's family tree forever, safe and secure, as a child of God.

---

Does your influence cause others to call on the name of the Lord? Why, or why not?

Enoch "walked with God." What does this mean in a practical sense, and how are you walking with God?

---



Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE

Genesis 6:1-12

A world engulfed in the darkness of sin needs the light of God's people shining brightly and consistently, demonstrating the truth and pointing others to it. Noah's life of holiness, patience, and perseverance was a lonely but bright light in an extremely dark world.

As we come to Genesis 6, you might need to hold on to your hat, because God's Word just might turn upside down some things you have believed.

In the fifth chapter of Genesis, we have the genealogy of Adam all the way down to Noah. I take this genealogy literally. There's absolutely no reason not to take it that way. In fact, this genealogy is identical to the genealogies presented in 1 Chronicles 1 and Luke chapter 3.

These genealogies clearly indicate something that might surprise you. They reveal that mankind has been around for 6,000 years.

When we put the biblical timeline together, Abraham lived 2,000 years after Adam. And Abraham lived about 2,000 years before the birth of Christ. And the Lord Jesus was born 2,000 years ago. So, do the math, and you get 6,000 years of human history.

The Bible tells us in Genesis chapter 1 that Adam and Eve were created on the sixth day of creation week. And in that same week, the earth and universe were created as well. The universe, then, is also around 6,000 years old.

Now wait a second. The academic world claims that the earth is 4.5 billion years old. They arrive at that

number, not from Genesis, but largely through radiometric dating of rocks and meteorites. That measures the decay of certain atoms and the presence of certain minerals to determine how old something had to be to have decayed that much or to have formed those minerals.

But the inconsistency of this measurement tool was proven by the volcanic eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980. Scientists measured the radioactive decay in the lava rock from that volcano after it cooled, and it measured 350,000 years old. And the minerals found in the rocks were dated at 2.4 million years old; but they had been formed in the volcanic eruption, just ten years earlier.<sup>1</sup>

Radiometric dating was off by as much as 2.4 million years. So, when people say the earth has



Gilgamesh standing on the head of Huwawa whom he has defeated.



to be 4.5 billion years old, they're using a measuring system that can't account for something unusual happening in time—like a volcanic eruption or some other catastrophe.

And the greatest catastrophe, known as the worldwide flood of Noah's time, is about to be described here in Genesis chapter 6.

But first, we've got another issue to settle. Genesis 6 begins by taking us back in time to set the stage for God's judgment.

We read here in verse 1:

*When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years." The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown.* (Genesis 6:1-4)

Now there are basically three views regarding the identity of these "sons of God" who produced the Nephilim, or giants, in the land.

One view says the "sons of God" were fallen angels who cohabited with women and produced a race of half-angel, half-human beings.

The problem with this view is that angels aren't created with the ability to procreate. Matthew 22:30 says angels aren't given in marriage. That doesn't just mean angels don't get married; it means they cannot fulfill one of the primary functions of marriage, which is reproduction.

Angels weren't created with the ability to produce sperm, or seed—DNA that could unite with a woman's DNA to produce a child. This view belongs in the comic books, as far as I'm concerned.

Another view is that the "sons of God" were godly descendants of Seth's line in the family tree, but they married ungodly women. It's hard for me to imagine that godly men suddenly started marrying ungodly women, although that can certainly happen.

The third view, which I believe, is that demons were involved here. The phrase "sons of God" is found in the Old Testament for angelic beings (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), and I believe it's used here for angelic beings who fell in rebellion against God, along with their leader, Satan.

Ever since then, they've attempted to corrupt mankind in any way they can. In 2 Peter 2:4-5 and in verses 6-7 in the book of Jude, demons are related to this incident here in Genesis chapter 6, so something is taking place in which the demons are involved.

*God isn't surprised here. He's not panicking. God has never called an emergency meeting of the Trinity.*

I believe fallen angels literally possessed unbelieving mankind to a large extent, intending to corrupt their offspring with a demonic, wicked character.





The offspring of these demon-possessed men included “Nephilim,” or giants. You can understand the word *Nephilim* to be a reference to physical giants or a reference to famous men or mighty leaders—frankly, they might have been both.

Now mankind is totally corrupted by demonic influence and immorality. Moses writes in verse 5:

*The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Verse 6 tells us, “The LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.” And at the end of verse 7 God Himself says, “I am sorry that I have made them.”

Now when you and I say, “I’m sorry” about something; it’s usually because we did something wrong. Did God do something wrong here when He created mankind? No. We’re simply being shown that God has true feelings of grief over the sinful condition of mankind, not because He made a mistake, but because sin has so thoroughly polluted the human race. And He’s truly sorry about that. He takes no pleasure in wickedness or judgment.

But God isn’t surprised here. He’s not panicking. God has never called an emergency meeting of the Trinity. God knew this would happen from eternity past, but it still grieved His heart.

Here in Genesis 6, we’re shown that humanity has become so vile and wicked that God will send judgment in the form of a flood that will cover the earth.

But God also introduces us to His gracious plan of

deliverance. And let me say that throughout human history, God’s plans usually involve a person. And in this case, that person’s name is Noah.

So, Genesis 6 introduces us to Noah. Let me point out a couple of characteristics of this godly man.

First, Noah chose purity even though he was surrounded by immorality. Noah’s culture won’t turn off the faucet of immorality; it’s flooding the earth. But in verse 9 we read that Noah is above reproach and that he “walked with God.”

Noah is just one little light in the darkness, but he’s going to let his little light shine. My friend, your culture does not have to rewrite your character.

Second, Noah was obedient even though God’s plans were confusing. Noah will be told to build a boat 500 feet long, 85 feet wide, and 50 feet high; this isn’t a little rowboat. In fact, it’s going to take him 120 years to build it. He’s never seen an ark; he’s never seen a flood. And the plans for this boat don’t call for a rudder or sails. So, who’s going to guide this thing? God will.

The last verse in Genesis 6 is perhaps the most remarkable: “Noah . . . did all that God commanded him.”

I don’t know about you, but I want to be a lot more like Noah. We’ll take a closer look at him in our next study.

---

How does your sin affect others? How does it affect God?

How can you prepare yourself to stand, as Noah did, as a shining light in a dark world?

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrew A. Snelling, “New Lava Dome with Old Radiometric Dates,” Answers in Genesis, [answersingenesis.org](http://answersingenesis.org).





## NOAH'S ARK

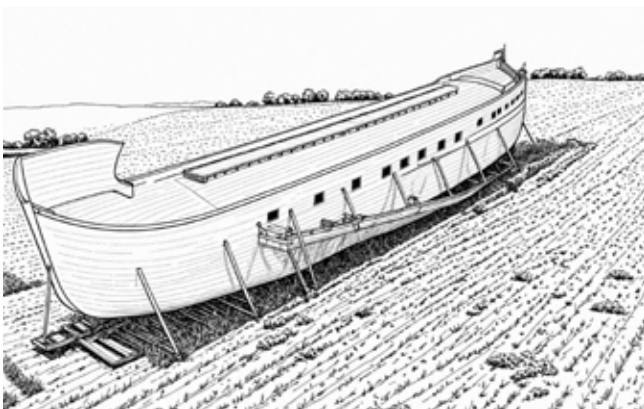
Genesis 6:13-22

Noah's ark was built according to God's plan. It was God who designed the ark to lodge and preserve all the animal kinds, along with Noah and his family; and it was God who brought the animals to Noah. And—as it still is today—it was *to* God people were to flee to find refuge and life.

**D**id you know that more than three hundred cultures, on every continent, have passed down legends of the ancient world being flooded with water?

A legend from Cuba tells the tale of an old man who knew a flood was coming, so he built a great ship and brought his family on board along with a host of animals.

A Mexican legend talks about a man who saved himself, his family, and some animals by floating on a raft. As the waters began to subside, he sent a vulture out to find land. When the vulture didn't return, he sent out a hummingbird, which came back carrying a branch with green leaves on it.



Noah's Ark looked like a barge and was designed for durability.

In Alaska, the legend is told of an ancestor who was warned in a dream that a flood would destroy the earth. So, he built a raft by which he saved himself, his family, and all kinds of animals. The animals could talk in those days, and they soon complained about the long journey. They probably kept asking Noah if they were there yet! After the water subsided, they all climbed off the raft, but the animals lost their ability to talk as punishment for complaining.

You might tell that one to your kids.

The Hawaiians repeat the legend of a man named Nu-U who built a canoe to escape a mighty flood, filling his canoe with plants and animals.<sup>1</sup>

These legends sound familiar, don't they?

Beloved, the Bible didn't borrow from all these religions and traditions; mankind simply passed down bits and pieces of what actually happened. Over the centuries, the facts became distorted by human imagination, even as some kernels of truth remained.

Well, the original, undistorted account is unerringly recorded in the Book of Beginnings. We're in Genesis chapter 6, where the Spirit of God directs Moses the prophet to write down what actually happened. And let me tell you, a global flood actually happened!



But the name of God's chosen man wasn't Nu-U, but Noah.

Beginning in verse 13 of Genesis 6, God says to Noah:

*I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die.* (Verses 13-17)

What you have here are the diagrams—the blueprints—for the ark. It'll be around 500 feet long and 85 feet wide and 50 feet high. It will be the size of a modern-day oil tanker or container ship, large enough to “contain the equivalent of 450 semi-trailers of cargo”—we're talking 1.88 million cubic feet.<sup>2</sup>

This wouldn't be a little canoe; this would be the largest vessel mankind had ever seen. And it needed to be, because it wasn't meant to carry just Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives. It was

designed to carry a lot of people—if they had decided to follow after God, which they didn't—and it was designed to carry a lot of animals too.

Now verses 19-20 make it clear Noah is going to have to prepare for bringing on board a male and female of every land animal. As chapter 7 specifies, this means all land animals that breathe through their nose (7:22).

Noah wasn't told to build an aquarium for the marine animals; they'll survive outside the ark in God's global aquarium.

*God built into the  
DNA of His  
animal creations  
the ability for  
amazing diversity  
and adaptation  
and development.*

Land animals were going to be arriving before the rain started to fall. And they would come in the four categories or groups that we still have today: amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds. By the way, insects take in oxygen through spiracles in their skin, and there is no mention of them being on the ark. They could have survived the flood by floating on debris or on carcasses of the dead.

Now skeptics will be quick to tell you that there are more than one million species of life in the world and that's a lot more than could ever fit on the ark. But 98 percent of these species are fish, invertebrates, and nonanimal life-forms, such as plants and bacteria. Check it out—there are less than 34,000 species of land animals in the world today.<sup>3</sup>

And you can reduce that number even more, because God specifically tells Noah here in Genesis 6:20 that



he'll be carrying on the ark birds after their kind, land animals after their kind, and creeping things of the earth after their kind.

A "kind" is a broader category than species. A kind can include several different species. For example, horses, zebras, and donkeys are three different species within the same [*equid*] kind, and all of them developed after the flood.

God built into the DNA of His animal creations the ability for amazing diversity and adaptation and development. Think of all the variety of human beings—different colors, sizes, shapes, and physical features—and yet we all descended from the same parents, Adam and Eve.

Calculations have been made that there are less than 1,400 land animal kinds on earth. Even after adding all the additional clean animals Noah took on the ark, according to God's command in Genesis 7:2-3, there would be less than 7,000 animals on the ark. And this three-story ark had room to spare for 7,000 animals.<sup>4</sup>

Finding room for all the animals doesn't require a miracle. Gathering them and herding them into the ark is another story. In fact, Noah isn't going to gather all these pairs of animal kinds; they're going to *arrive* two by two.

Now some people can't even imagine animals arriving two by two. Frankly, I can't imagine that either! This, and getting these wild animals walking in pairs up a gangplank and through the door of the ark, is a miraculous work.

I can't keep my dog in the yard.

Listen, this is God at work. If He created the animals, He can control them.

- God called the animals to that ark. Many of them traveled for days, weeks, or months to reach the ark.
- God called them, and He controlled them up that gangplank, and then He calmed them throughout the duration of that turbulent flood.

God could have miraculously re-created the entire animal kingdom after the flood and spared Noah all this trouble. But He didn't. He chose to rescue from judgment Noah and all who entered the ark. And in the New Testament we're told why. God intended salvation to look a lot like entering the ark (1 Peter 3:18-22).

You had to walk through the only door on that ark to be saved from the judgment of God. There was no other option. Jesus says, "I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved" (John 10:9). The ark becomes a picture of God's miracle of rescue and redemption in Christ.

So, have you booked passage? Have you entered through that one and only door? Have you found safety and refuge in Jesus Christ? There is no other way.

---

What common misconceptions about Noah's ark and preparations for the flood are corrected by a careful reading of the text of Scripture?

What does the design of the ark tell you about the Designer?

---

<sup>1</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: Volume 1* (Baker, 2006), 355-56.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Belknap and Tim Chaffey, "How Could All the Animals Fit on the Ark?" Answers in Genesis, April 2, 2019, [answersingenesis.org](http://answersingenesis.org).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)







## THE GLOBAL FLOOD

Genesis 7:1–8:14

The extent of the great flood and its destruction bears testimony to the extent of human depravity. The flood speaks of God's righteousness in the judgment of sinners. The ark that rode on the flood testifies to His grace and mercy to those sinners who turn to Him in faith.

When we left Noah at the conclusion of our last study, the ark was completed and the animals had arrived miraculously in pairs, male and female, and walked up the gangplank into that massive three-story ark.

Now if the arrival of all these animals didn't get the neighbors' attention, nothing would. The truth is, for 120 years, as Noah built that ark, he would periodically pause and preach a message of warning about the coming judgment of water flooding the earth (2 Peter 2:5).

Crowds probably gathered in the early years to mock him, but my guess is, after 120 years, the world was ignoring him. In fact, the only people who responded to his invitation to join him on the ark were his three sons, their wives, and his own wife. Not one other person believed the message he preached.

Not many churches today would invite Noah to preach evangelistic services. I don't think the average church today would even want to hear a message of judgment and a call for repentance from sin. But Noah was faithful; and that's all God requires of His messengers—to stay the course and deliver the truth in love.

Now, Genesis chapter 7:2-3 informs us that clean



Tablet containing the Sumerian flood story with its hero, Ziusudra.

animals were being gathered in larger groups of seven—presumably because they'll be used for food and then later for sacrifices.

After all the animals have entered, along with Noah's family, moving all their suitcases inside the ark, I imagine Noah pausing and turning to the crowd that no doubt had gathered at this strange sight. And I can hear him asking them one final time if anybody



wants to join them and be saved from the coming judgment. But, of course, Scripture makes it clear that not one person ran up that gangplank to safety.

Verse 7 tells us, “And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood.”

Then down at verse 10 we read, “And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.”

Now wait a second. They get into the ark, and God personally shuts the door (verse 16). Then what happens? Nothing.

For seven days, not one drop of rain—nothing but sunshine. After about the fifth day of clear skies, I imagine the crowd outside starting to celebrate. There’s no rain to be seen.

By now the neighbors have started a volleyball tournament and fired up the barbecue grills there under the shade of the ark. They’re having a great time! “God isn’t going to judge anybody. Pass me some more potato salad; we’re all going to be just fine.”

We don’t know why God waited seven days. We’re never told that God explained the delay to Noah either. He usually doesn’t explain His delays to you either.

Maybe this was God’s way of showing His mercy is long-suffering. But after the seventh day, the picnic turns into a panic. Verses 11-12 read:

*On that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights.*

Where I live, if it rains hard for an hour, water fills the drainage ditches; if it rains hard for a day, streets start flooding; if it rains hard for three or four days, rivers start overflowing.

Well, here it rains for forty days and forty nights; and added to that, we’re told that great underground res-

ervoirs explode like volcanic eruptions. In less than six weeks, the earth’s surface is covered with water.

The Bible says over in verse 17. “The waters increased and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.”

Verse 19 reads: “The waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered.” And verse 20 says, “The waters prevailed above the mountains, covering them fifteen cubits deep.” That’s twenty-five feet higher than the mountaintops!

*God states in the clearest way possible that this was a global flood.*

Now look at verse 21:

*And all flesh died that moved on the earth, birds, livestock, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm on the earth, and all mankind.*

Notice that repeated word “all”? Let me give you the literal meaning of the Hebrew word for “all”—it means “all.”

And in case you have any doubts, look at verses 23-24:

*[God] blotted out every living thing that was on the face of the ground, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens. They were blotted out from the earth. Only Noah was*



*left, and those who were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed on the earth 150 days.*

God states here in the clearest way possible that this was a *global* flood. This wasn't a local flood or a regional flood but a *worldwide* flood.

We're told in Genesis 8:4 that "the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat."

Many people I talk to think the flood was a local flood and Noah got into a boat and floated around for a few weeks and then bumped into Mount Ararat. Well, Mount Ararat is 17,000 feet high, and God tells us in verse 5 that it took several months for the floodwater to run off before "the tops of the mountains were seen."

That's a lot of water running off to form the oceans and rivers and lakes, and to refill many of those underground reservoirs with water.

Most people don't realize that Noah and his family are on this ark for slightly over one year. This wasn't a little weekend trip out in their sailboat.

Finally, in verse 6, Noah sends out a raven, but it can't find a place to land. Then he sends out a dove in verse 8, and the dove can't find a resting place. Why? Verse 9 tells us "the waters were still on the face of the whole earth."

Noah waits another seven days to send out that dove again. It amazes me that Noah waits another week to send out the dove. He's been in that ark for nearly a year! I would've been sending out a dove every thirty minutes until I ran out of birds.

For people to believe that this was not a global flood, they have to ignore the record of Scripture.

If the flood was local, the animals, along with a lot

of people, simply could have migrated to higher ground. If the flood was regional, God's word becomes untrustworthy because He repeats that the waters covered the *whole* earth. And God's promise over in Genesis 9:11 becomes a lie, because He tells Noah He will never send another flood like this one again. I don't know if you watch the news, but every year regions of our world experience floods.

So, if God was promising that another *local* or *regional* flood would never occur again, His promise has been broken over and over again.

By the way, Jesus will use the global flood as an illustration of future, worldwide judgment. In Matthew 24:37, the Lord says, "For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." The Lord's return isn't going to impact some small region of the earth but the entire world. The apostle Peter said that the early world perished by water, but a future judgment of fire will fall on all who do not believe in Christ (2 Peter 3:6-7).

My friend, the people of Noah's generation ignored the warning, and judgment came. Let me invite you to believe God's warning of a future judgment. Ask the Lord right now to save you from that final judgment of fire. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Make sure you're safe from God's coming judgment.

---

How would you measure your faithfulness to God, and how can you develop more consistent faithfulness?

Why is it important to affirm that the flood was global in extent? How is this truth tied to God's character?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THE RAINBOW

Genesis 8:15 – 9:17

The global flood of Noah's day not only brought divine judgment upon the sinful world; it also brought about some significant changes to our world that are still evident today. Moreover, the flood gave rise to some wonderful promises of God to all humanity.

Following the worldwide flood, a number of things changed.

First, the earth's topography was dramatically changed. We're told in Genesis 7:11, "The fountains of the deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened." Down in verse 19 we're told, "The waters prevailed so mightily on the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered."

In verse 20 we're told the water was at least twenty-five feet higher than the tallest mountain. And that answers the question as to how marine fossils are

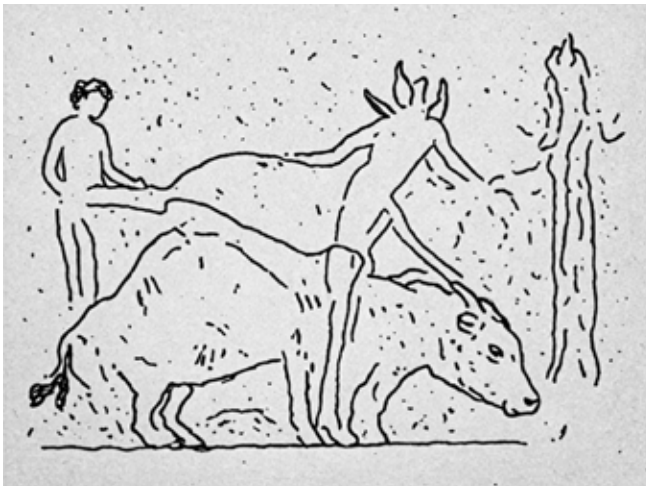
found on the summits of our tallest mountains. The flood deposited them there.

And then we're told in chapter 8 and verse 3 that it took five months for all that water to recede, which would have created tremendous changes through sudden erosion.

If it pours rain for a couple of hours, the water creates gullies and little avalanches and miniature waterfalls in my backyard. It picks up my mulch and moves it twenty feet down the driveway.

People tell me, "Stephen, the earth has to be millions of years old, because it would take millions of years to erode those canyons and river valleys." Normally, yes. But this global catastrophe wasn't normal. There was immense pressure from water, volcanic lava, rock and ice flows, the bursting of underground rivers, and the pushing up of the earth's crust. When the rain stopped, there was nearly a year of receding, rushing water forming and filling the oceans and canyons and lakes. Can you imagine the erosion?

We know that one wave in a storm can pick up a boulder weighing six thousand pounds and toss it around like a baseball. Imagine boulders crashing around in the floodwaters, carving and sculpting the planet's surface.



Painting from the tomb of Ity depicting the sacrifice of an ox.





Today the earth looks millions of years old, with breath-taking rock formations and waterfalls and canyons, and islands formed from volcanic eruptions, all of which would have taken millions of years to form under normal conditions. But according to God's Word, it was all shaped in a matter of months during the flood.

Now, there's another change following the flood, and it relates to the weather.

The Bible tells us that in the early days of creation—all the way up to the time of Noah—it had never rained (Genesis 2:5). The earth had been watered with heavy dew, from evaporation and condensation, along with underground springs and rivers of water.

During the flood, we're told, the underground reservoirs exploded, producing the water that then filled the ocean basins and water systems that literally cover 71 percent of the earth's surface.

Due to the flood and volcanic ash blocking out the light of the sun for quite some time, as well as intense evaporation of so much water, there was indeed an ice age that followed. Conservative estimates consider the ice age lasting several hundred years, not the millions of years promoted by evolutionists.<sup>1</sup>

*There's another promise that comes first, and it's just as significant as the one associated with the rainbow.*

Now, God gives Noah and his family a wonderful covenant promise, as they leave the ark. And I think if you asked most Christians what that promise was, they would immediately refer to the rainbow. But there's another promise that comes first, and it's just as significant as the one associated with the rainbow.

As Noah and his family are leaving the ark, where they've spent the past year, God promises them:

*While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.* (Genesis 8:22)

This promise means that the earth isn't going to burn up or dry up. The sun's not going to fizzle out, and we won't run out of food or water as long as the earth remains.

And the Bible tells us the earth will remain until God destroys it at the end of human history. The apostle Peter writes about this event in 2 Peter 3:10:

*The heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be [burned up].*

So, the earth is going to remain until the final judgment, the Bible tells us, which will take place at the end of the millennial kingdom, in Revelation chapter 20.

Back here in Genesis 8 we have this promise that answers everybody who wonders if the planet is going to run out of trees or be destroyed by climate change or fried by some solar flare.

Listen to God's promise to Noah again here in Genesis 8:

*While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.*

So, you can go to sleep tonight and pillow your head on the promise of God that you're not going to have



to save the planet. After all, this is God's planet, not yours. Now, don't pollute it. Take care of it, and be a good steward of it; but just remember, God has already planned for the creation of a new universe and a brand-new earth for His redeemed to enjoy and explore forever. John the apostle writes in Revelation 21:1: "Then I saw a new heaven [universe] and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away."

There's another change following the flood, and this involves the relationship between animals and humans. In chapter 9 God tells Noah that He's going to place within animals a natural fear of mankind.

The Bible says in verse 2:

*The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea.*

Now that's going to protect the human race from some pretty big animals. And that's not a bad thing for the animals either, because God tells Noah in verse 3, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you."

God allows humans to eat whatever animals will taste good—and chickens haven't been safe since! Now you're not *commanded* to eat meat, and you might not want to eat meat for personal reasons; but remember that people like me have God's full permission to eat a cheeseburger every once in a while.

Here's the greater principle: God has given dominion of the animal kingdom to mankind for the benefit and support of mankind, and for food, according to God's Word.

But when somebody denies God as Creator and the

Word of God as a guidebook, what happens? The rights of animals often increase while the rights of humans decrease.

In America today it's a federal offense to crush the egg of an unborn eagle, but a doctor can crush an unborn human baby without being prosecuted. Whenever God's Word is denied, human value decreases, and animal value frequently increases. I've seen starving children in the streets in India while a cow lay in the shade chewing its cud. Why don't they barbecue that cow and feed those kids? Well, because they believe that a cow is more valuable than a child.

Now that doesn't mean we can go around mistreating animals. A godly man takes care of the needs of his animals—including his cows (Proverbs 12:10). But the time may come when he'll butcher that cow and feed his family, because his family is more important than a cow.

Now there's one more promise from God, and this is the one you've been expecting. In verse 11 God promises He will never again cover the earth with a flood. And He establishes the rainbow as the permanent sign of this promise in verse 13.

And God has kept this promise. There have been local and regional floods, but a worldwide flood has never taken place again—and never will.

---

How would you summarize the biblical view of animals? Why is it important to understand and maintain this viewpoint?

How do God's promises in Genesis 8 and 9 shape your thinking and attitudes toward the earth and its future?

---

<sup>1</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Baker Book House, 1976), 215; Jonathan D. Sarfati, *The Genesis Account* (Creation Book Publishers, 2015), 587





## THE CURSE OF CANAAN

Genesis 9:18-29

While the earth had been cleansed by the great flood, it soon became evident that sin had not been eradicated from the human heart. Both godly Noah and his son Ham demonstrate that truth and remind us to always be prepared for the temptations that are sure to come.

One of the greatest proofs that the Bible is inspired by God is that it doesn't cover up the failures of key figures.

In Genesis 9 Noah and his family have disembarked from that great ark, following the flood. The animals that had miraculously arrived at the ark a year earlier in pairs are now going to be miraculously guided by their Creator to the perfect habitats suitable for their well-being.

Now this would be a great a place to put a period on the biography of Noah. But God inspires Moses to keep on writing, and sadly we read this, beginning in verse 20:

*Noah began to be a man of the soil, and he planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine and became drunk and lay uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and told his two brothers outside. Then Shem and*

*Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulders, and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father.*

(verses 20-23)

Noah gets drunk from his homemade wine, and he staggers around naked before passing out. His son Ham witnesses this and goes and tells his two brothers, Shem and Japheth.

The Hebrew word for “told” indicates Ham tells his brothers with delight. Ham is loving the public



Painting from the tomb of Nakht depicting the gathering of grapes for wine.



humiliation of his father. And this tells you just as much about Noah's lapse in judgment as it does his son's spiritual condition. What will be proven true over time is that Ham is mocking his father, and in doing so, he knows full well he's effectively mocking his father's God.

Now some people try to claim that Ham molested his father; others suggest that seeing his father's nakedness is a euphemism for committing incest with his mother while his father was drunk. Well, that might make for a sensational story, but Ham doesn't have a sexual problem; he has a spiritual problem.

Let's look at Noah's response:

*When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." (verses 24-25)*

Remember, Noah is the patriarch and high priest of this family. So, when Noah learns that Ham has openly mocked him, he knows this, in reality, is deeper than mockery. This is spiritual apostasy.

And Noah delivers a prophecy in the form of a curse on Ham's son, Canaan. He says in verse 25 that Canaan and his descendants will be servants to his brothers and their descendants in the future.

Now this curse has been taken out of context by many people over the centuries to claim that people of African descent were cursed by God with slavery.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. All you have to do is read the verse; it says, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers."

This curse isn't on Ham; it's on Ham's son, Canaan. And the African nations didn't descend from Canaan; they descended from another son of Ham named Cush; it's from Cush that the dark-skinned Africans descended.

Noah isn't cursing Ham or his son Cush; Noah is

prophesying the future of *Canaan's* descendants—the Canaanites.

And if you keep reading your Bible, you'll discover over in Genesis 11 that Noah's firstborn son, Shem, will become the forefather of the Hebrew people.

So, what we find here in Noah's curse on Canaan is an amazing prophecy. Centuries later, after God delivers the Hebrew nation from Egypt and eventually leads them into the promised land, who's waiting there to fight them? It's the descendants of Canaan; and they've created all kinds of Canaanite clans and kingdoms known as the Ammorites and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Girgashites and a bunch of other mosquito bites.

They're waiting to suck the blood out of the Hebrew people, as it were, and wipe them off the face of the earth.

Now follow this: The Canaanites are going to try to get rid of the Hebrew people, the descendants of Shem. Why? Because Satan, the power behind these wicked people, knows that it is through the line of Shem that the Messiah will one day come.

*The Bible reveals to us that there is only one race—the human race.*

So, who wins? Again, the Bible tells us that when the tribes of Israel come into the land of Canaan, they eventually conquer the Canaanites, and Noah's prophecy comes to pass. The defeated Canaanites become forced laborers to the nation of Israel for many years.

Now in chapters 10 and 11 of Genesis, we're given the family trees of Noah's three sons. Remember, after the flood, this is all there is. This *is* the human race—Noah, along with his wife, and his three sons, with their wives.





And listed there are seventy sons and grandsons that descended from Noah's three sons. And from those listed, all the people groups and all the nations on Planet Earth have descended.

Now, I want to make this important point here. It's a point the apostle Paul makes very clearly as he preaches in Athens, as recorded in Acts 17. Paul says:

*And [God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.* (verse 26)

God made every nation from one man—Adam. We all descended from Adam, down through Noah, down through his three sons. We all have come from the same family tree.

So, where did the different nations come from? In our next study, we'll explore the great migration of mankind following the Tower of Babel.

But for now, God planned for the development of diverse nations, with all their distinctive features and languages. You won't hear this in school or read it in the newspaper—and, frankly, many Christians miss the point too. But according to what we find here in the book of Genesis, which presents the family tree of mankind, there may be different nationalities and different ethnic groups and different languages and different physical features, and different skin colors, but it is incorrect to refer to different *races*.

There's not a white race and a black race and an Asian race and a Hispanic race; the Bible reveals to us that there is only one race—the human race. We all descended from the same family, and that means we are all related.

God creatively built into the gene pool of the *human race* the genetic potential for all kinds of variety, all kinds of physical distinctions that became predominant as people groups gathered around a language, as we'll see later in Genesis 11.

The amount of melanin in your skin gives your skin its color. And this level is determined by what dominates within your particular people group. Today we have ethnicities and even nations known for producing light-skinned people, dark-skinned people; brown-tinted people; red-tinted, yellow-tinted, and everything in between.

There are physical features that developed among ethnic groups, like round eyelids or slanted eyelids; some are tall, and others are short; some have dark hair, and others have light hair—and some of us are just praying for *hair*.

Beloved, if you believe you're superior to someone else because of your nationality or skin color, it isn't so much that you don't understand humanity; you don't understand God!

According to God's Word, *every* human being is actually related, having descended from the same family. We're all members of one race—the human race.

Let me tell you, racial prejudice comes from a sinful heart of pride that considers oneself better than somebody else.

But here's the good news: Jesus can change hearts. The cross of Christ is color-blind. Oh, this is the truth of our Creator, who made us, and the gospel of His Son, who saves us.

---

What specific steps can you take to avoid anything that might bring shame upon you and the Lord you represent?

Why is it important to acknowledge that all humanity has a common origin? Do you live consistently with that truth? If not, why not?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THE TOWER OF BABEL

Genesis 10:1–11:9

The Tower of Babel marks one of the great turning points of history. It explains the origin of nations and the wide diversity of languages and people. It also highlights the power of God to accomplish His purposes despite the rebellious actions of humanity.

Today we complete the opening section of the book of Genesis—chapters 1–11. This portion of Scripture is the most foundationally important section in the entire Bible.

It's unfortunate that many so-called Christians today say that Genesis 1–11 is not that critical. It's just poetry, they say; it's just a series of folktales and legends to encourage people in life; you don't need to take it all so literally.

Well, if God didn't say what He meant, how do we know the rest of the Bible is what He really meant to say?

Let me tell you, so many of our core doctrines are directly or indirectly introduced in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. This is why there's such a battle over these chapters.

- Did God literally create the universe to be perfectly suited for life on earth?
- Who created male and female genders?
- Who created marriage to be cooperation instead of competition?
- Where did sin come from?
- Where did the idea of an innocent animal dying for sin come from?
- Was there a promise of someone becoming

the final sacrifice to pay for our sin?

- Why do we have to grow old and die?
- Where did crime and justice come from?
- How old is the human race?
- Why does the earth look millions of years old, if it was created only thousands of years ago according to Genesis?
- How do we know if Planet Earth will be able to sustain life throughout human history?

Well, all these questions have been answered in Genesis 1 through 9.

Genesis chapter 10 answers another question:

- Where did all the nations of the earth come from?

The answer is very simple. They all descended from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. A long list of the descendants of these three sons is given

*Every nation today  
can trace its roots  
back to one of  
Noah's three sons.*



in chapter 10, which concludes in verse 32, “From these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood.”

So, every nation today can trace its roots back to one of Noah’s three sons.

Here’s another question that’s answered in Genesis 11:

- Where did all the different languages come from?

Now evolutionists argue that humans learned to talk by grunting, like the animals from which we supposedly descended. The problem with this theory is that as far back as we’ve been able to trace human languages, we’ve discovered complex languages with vocabulary and grammar, not primitive symbols or grunts.

The evidence proves that language isn’t the result of evolution over millions of years but that language appeared immediately, in complex forms. We know from Genesis 2 that language is a unique characteristic of humans—a communication gift to us from God’s creative wisdom.

But how did we jump from one language given to Adam and Eve to so many different languages today?

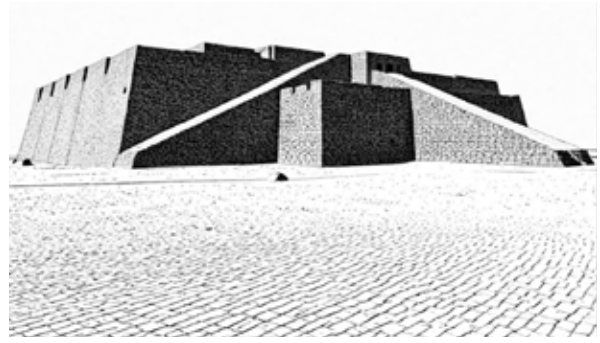
In Genesis 11 we’re told how it happened. Look at verses 1-2:

*Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.*

At this point, everyone is speaking the language God created for Adam and Eve. We’re not told what that language was, so don’t write and ask me because I don’t know.

Following the flood, the people stayed together and eventually arrived in the land of Shinar. Shinar is the original Babylon. We’re going to run into this city of ungodly defiance throughout Scripture.

So, here’s the human race, a hundred years after the flood, probably numbering several hundred thousand people by now. They’re migrating to this beautiful area and effectively ignoring God’s command in



Ziggurat in Ur as it looks today, partially reconstructed.

Genesis 9 to disperse and populate the earth.

They make their defiant declaration here in verse 4:

*“Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”*

In other words, “We’re not going to disperse and obey God’s command.”

Now back in chapter 10 and verse 8 we’re given the name of their leader—Nimrod.

In verse 9 he’s called “a mighty hunter before the LORD.” The phrase “before the LORD” literally means “in opposition to the Lord.” “Mighty hunter” means “despot.” Nimrod is going to become the world’s first dictator.<sup>1</sup>

And the centerpiece of his empire is a tower. We’re told now in verse 4 of chapter 11 that it was “a tower with its top in the heavens.” Literally, the top represented the heavens—the stars and constellations.

Archeologists have discovered the remains of a tower in this region—a step pyramid, or ziggurat—which was part of a religious system. The Arabs in this region even nicknamed it the Tower of Nimrod. We don’t know if it’s the original tower ruins or not.

What we do know is that Nimrod created the worship system around the stars and planets. The historian Herodotus, who lived four hundred years before Christ, wrote that these ziggurats were topped by religious shrines. Apparently, these shrines were brightly tiled and painted with the astral signs of the



zodiac. Here in Genesis 11, these people built the original tower and developed the worship system of the heavens and what we now call astrology.

You might think nobody today would believe that stars and planets out there influence their lives. Oh, but to this day, people pore over their horoscopes, believing the stars have power over their lives. People today even talk about speaking into the universe and the universe responding with an answer.

From the Tower of Babel, astrology seems to have passed over to ancient Egypt. The famous sphinx has the head of a woman, representing Virgo, the first sign of the zodiac. It has the body of a lion, more than likely representing Leo, the last sign of the zodiac. In other words, the sphinx may have represented their worship of the universe, which they believed was immortal—the beginning and the end.

In Revelation 22 Jesus will set the record straight once and for all when He says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

Now, back in Genesis 11, we read of the Lord’s response to the building of the tower:

*And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s*

*speech.” So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth.* (verses 5-8)

In His gracious restraint of their growing idolatry, the Lord supernaturally separates mankind by creating different languages.

Listen, if God can create one language for Adam and Eve, He can certainly create more than one.

By the way, the Lord is going to perform another miracle involving language in the future millennial kingdom, when He brings all His redeemed together following the tribulation period. He announces through Zephaniah the prophet:

*“I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.”* (Zephaniah 3:9)

We may still use our native languages in the kingdom, but God will give us all the ability to speak the same language as well. The separation of mankind at the Tower of Babel is going to be miraculously reversed in the coming kingdom, and we will worship our king and Creator in one, universal language.

---

How would you answer fellow Christians who downplay the importance of the early chapters of Genesis?

What does the Tower of Babel reveal about God and His priorities? What does it reveal about humanity?

---

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan D. Sarfati, *The Genesis Account* (Creation Book Publishers, 2015), 642.







## FATHER ABRAHAM

Genesis 11:10–14:24

From his first appearance in the Bible, Abraham's life is characterized by trust in God and the promises God made to him. But his life does not just demonstrate Abraham's faithfulness; it also demonstrates the faithfulness of Abraham's God—and ours.

Now as we introduce the life Abraham, I don't plan on making him into some kind of spiritual superstar; we already have too many superstars and not enough servants. Besides, the real hero here is Abraham's great and gracious God.

Abraham is introduced to us in Genesis 11 by his original name Abram. He's married to Sarai, as she's called here, and he has a nephew named Lot. They're all living in Ur, which is in modern-day Iraq.

Now when we first meet Abram here, he's seventy-five years old. God captures his heart and reveals to him the role he will play in fulfilling God's promise—a promise made to Adam and Eve of a coming Seed,

the Redeemer. That Seed is going to come from the family line of Abram and his wife Sarai, who, as we'll learn later, have not been able to have any children their entire marriage.

The call of Abram in chapter 12 originally takes place while he is still in Ur, before going to Haran (Acts 7:2). In this call, the Lord gives some commands and makes some promises to Abram.

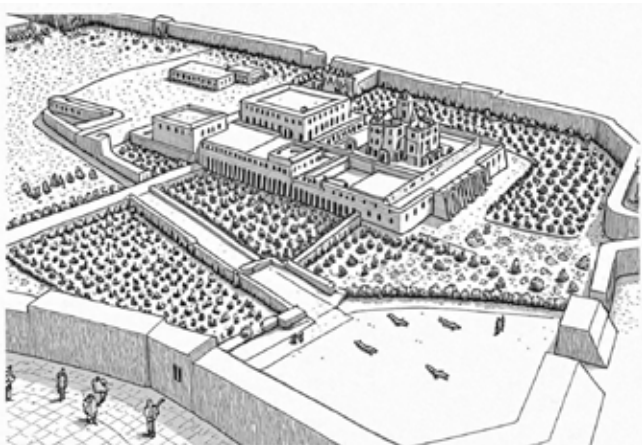
In verse 1 we read, "Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred.'" This is a command to leave his place of stability and security.

Abram's hometown was a spiritual desert, and God commands him to leave. But this was the place of his extended family and circle of friends and business associates. God says, "Abram, I want you to leave the stability of everything you've ever known. Leave the security of everything that's familiar, and don't stop until I tell you."

And with that, the Lord makes some promises to Abram.

The first promise relates to Abram's *promotion*. In verse 2, God says:

*"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and*



Model of the ancient city of Ur



*make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”*

Abram is to obey God, and God will do the rest. Promotion comes neither from the east nor the west, but from God (Psalm 75:6-7). From Abram, God will make a great nation—Israel.

The second promise relates to Abram’s *protection*. In verse 3, God says, “I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse.”

History has proven over and over that God has protected the nation that came from Abram. You’ve never once met a member of the Philistine nation; you’ve never met a Hittite or any Canaanite. Those nations don’t exist anymore. But you’ve certainly met someone from the Israelite nation, and that’s because God keeps His promises.

God’s promises relate to Abram’s promotion and his protection. Now the Lord adds a third promise that relates to Abram’s *prominence*. In verse 3, the Lord says, “And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The Lord is telling Abram that the Redeemer who will bless the earth is going to descend from him.

And we’re told in verse 4 that Abram responds in faith: “So Abram went, as the LORD had told him.” At seventy-five years of age, following his father’s death in Haran, Abram takes his wife and his nephew Lot and starts traveling, not knowing where the Lord will take him.

How’s that for a life of faith! And after traveling some five hundred miles, he arrives in the land of Canaan, and there the Lord says to him in chapter 12 and verse 7, “To your offspring I will give this land.” This is your homeland, Abram—this is the promised land. And we read that Abram “built there an altar to the LORD.”

Abram moves from there to a mountain between Bethel and Ai, the highest point in the region, from which he can literally see the land the Lord has promised to give him and his descendants forever. He builds another altar and calls upon the Lord—he’s worshipping his true and living God.

Abram leaves this mountain, and verse 10 tells us that a famine arises in the land. Now after all these

promises and provisions and worship services, we would think Abram would trust God to take care of him. But instead he decides to depend on Egypt and departs for that land.

*History has proven  
over and over that  
God has protected  
the nation that came  
from Abram.*

As Abram and Sarai approach Egypt, he starts worrying about his beautiful wife. She probably rolls her eyes, but they agree she will be introduced as his sister; otherwise, they reason, some Egyptian might kill him in order to take his wife. And what happens?

*The Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful . . . they praised her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house.* (verses 14-15)

Sarai’s going to become one more concubine in Pharaoh’s harem. Now what? Well, God steps in and strikes Pharaoh’s house with a plague. He quickly connects the dots and sends Abram, with Sarai, out of his country.

In chapter 13 we find a rather humiliated Abram traveling back to Canaan .

*He journeyed . . . to the place where his tent had been at the beginning . . . to the place where he had made an altar . . . and there Abram called upon the name of the LORD.* (verses 3-4)



There's nothing sweeter than getting back to that place of fellowship with your merciful, faithful God.

The Bible now shifts our attention to Abram's nephew. We're told in verses 5-6 of chapter 13 that Lot's flocks and herds have multiplied and there's not enough pasture to allow Lot and Abram to stay together.

Abram graciously offers Lot his choice of the land, and in verses 10-11 Lot chooses the well-watered plain of the Jordan, a land bordering the Canaanite cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot dwells near Sodom, whose inhabitants are described in verse 13 as "great sinners against the LORD." Lot has chosen fertile land in a region where people have no interest in God.

Perhaps to encourage Abram's faith, the Lord speaks to him again:

*"Lift up your eyes and look . . . for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. . . . arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you."*

(verses 14-15, 17)

And with that, Abram builds another altar and holds another worship service.

It isn't all sunshine and worship services, however. Chapter 14 records the invasion of four kings, who fight with the kings in the region of Sodom. The invaders are not only victorious but also take Lot prisoner.

Well, Uncle Abram doesn't waste any time. Verse 14 says he "led forth his trained men . . . and went in pursuit." The Hebrew word for "led" here has to do with wielding a sword. Evidently Abram had taken sword fighting in college, and he is good at it. He and his men defeat these kings and free the captives.

Now as Abram is returning home, Genesis 14:18 tells us that Melchizedek, the king of Salem—later named Jerusalem—comes out to greet him. Melchizedek also is a priest of Jehovah, and he gives Abram food and pronounces a blessing on him. Abram gives this king and priest a share of his spoils out of respect and admiration.

Melchizedek appears and then disappears suddenly in Scripture. He'll be presented as a picture of Christ, our High Priest and King in Hebrews 7.

Now in these few chapters, Abram's faith has had its ups and downs, to say the least. He might have wavered back there in Egypt, but now he's standing for what's right and godly.

I don't know what your battle is today, but I know your life isn't all sunshine and worship services either. Perhaps God is leading you from a place of security and stability as well. You can rest in knowing He is worthy of your trust and will always keep His promises.

---

How does Abram's response to God's call challenge your faith? What keeps you from acting in faith on the basis of God's promises?

How is God's faithfulness demonstrated in Abram's life? How is it demonstrated in your life?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## A COVENANT BY FAITH ALONE

Genesis 15–17

Too often we fail to rest in God's promises. Fear creeps in and overcomes our faith. This is nothing new. Even Abraham, a man of great faith, faltered at times. Yet his failures gave rise to God's assurances and reminders that God's promises are as sure as He is faithful.

One of the great hymns of the church begins with these words:

*Standing on the promises of Christ my King,  
Through eternal ages let His praises ring;  
Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,  
Standing on the promises of God.<sup>1</sup>*

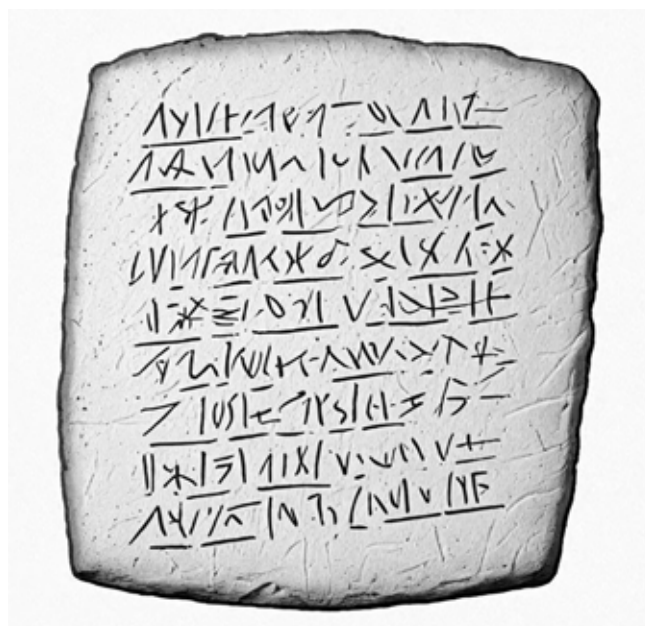
It's one thing to sing that—it's another thing to live it. And that's the challenge facing Abram and Sarai in Genesis 15 through 17.

Abram is more fearful than faithful at this point, so the Lord reaffirms His promise. In verse 1 of chapter 15, God says to him: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

But Abram complains in verse 2, "O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless?"

Abram is saying, "We still don't have that promised baby. I'm trying to stand on the promises of God, but my feet of faith keep slipping." And Abram is now in his eighties—that's not exactly the time you go out and buy a baby crib and a diaper pail.

The Lord tells Abram to go outside and look up at the sky:



Marriage contract from roughly the time of Abraham and Sarah

*"Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them ... so shall your offspring be." (verse 5)*

And verse 6 tells us that Abram "believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness."





God “counted it . . . as righteousness.” That means, God declared Abram to be righteous, or justified, *by faith*. Abram hasn’t done anything but believe the word of God. Being made righteous, or right, with God is always a matter of believing the word of God. And God says His free gift is eternal life if you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior (Romans 6:23). He does all the work; we simply believe—by faith alone.

*Being made  
righteous, or right,  
with God is  
always a matter  
of believing the  
word of God.*

Now in verse 7 the Lord repeats His promise of giving the land to Abram’s descendants, the Hebrew nation. This isn’t a figurative promise. God is talking about literal real estate. And by the way, this promise hasn’t changed. God will finally and completely give Israel the promised land in Christ’s literal future kingdom on earth. What we’ve seen so far in human history is only temporary and a partial fulfillment of this promise.

Abram asks the Lord in verse 8, “How am I to know that I shall possess it?” And the Lord responds by telling Abram to prepare for a covenant ceremony. This might seem strange to us because we’re used to signing contracts with lawyers in the room. But to Abram, a covenant ceremony would have been well known.

There were several kinds of covenants in the Old Testament. In a salt covenant, you gave the other party a pinch of salt. In a sandal covenant, you gave someone your sandal, signifying he could walk in your shoes. These covenants were binding unless you got your pinch of salt or your sandal back.

But a blood covenant was irreversible. Animals were

killed and divided in two. The parties to the covenant would walk between those pieces to ratify their agreement. You might get your sandal back, but you’re not gonna put that animal back together again.

God even brought a deep sleep upon Abram in verse 12, and then God alone moved between the animal pieces. The Lord’s presence is symbolized in verse 17 by a “smoking fire pot and a flaming torch”—much like that later pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night in Moses’ time. God is not going to depend on Abram or his descendants. This is a promise God is keeping all by Himself.

As Abram sleeps, the Lord gives him a prophetic dream about the future. He speaks to Abram in verse 13:

*“Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years.”*

And that’s exactly what happened, as the nation of Israel ended up in the land of Egypt for four hundred years.

Down in verse 18, God concludes His promise to Abram by saying, “To your offspring I give this land.” Literally translated, this says, “I *have given* this land.” It’s as good as done. Abram, you can stand on the promises of God.

But Abram ends up tripping over the promises, and we read in Genesis 16:1:

*Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar.*

Abram is now eighty-five years old, and they still don’t have a son. I have a hard time waiting on God for days; I can’t imagine waiting all these years.

The problem is, they decide to implement Plan B. Beloved, whenever you set aside God’s plans and imple-



ment your own, a trainload of trouble is going to follow.

Abram takes Sarai's maidservant, Hagar, and lies with her, and she conceives. But verse 4 tells us that as soon as Hagar conceives, she despises Sarai. Sarai then retaliates by banishing her maid. We're told in verse 7 that the angel of the Lord appears to Hagar in the wilderness, and He promises to bless her with a son and tells her to name her son Ishmael (verse 11), meaning "God hears."

Instead of waiting for the miraculous birth of their son, Isaac, whose descendants will become the Jewish nation, Abram and Sarai's Plan B results in the birth of Ishmael, who will grow up and father the Arab nations. And if you haven't noticed, the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac are still fighting over the promised land to this day.

And by the way, the fighting isn't going to stop permanently until Jesus descends to set up His kingdom on earth, with Jerusalem as His capital city. And all who believe in Him—Jewish and Arab believers, European and African believers, American and Asian believers—all the redeemed will one day rejoice together, united by faith in Christ.

Now the last verse of chapter 16 and the first verse of chapter 17 are separated by thirteen years. As Genesis 17 opens, we're told that Abram is now ninety-nine years old. It is humanly impossible for Abram and Sarai to have a baby, which is why God introduces Himself to Abram in verse 1 by a new name, El Shaddai, "God Almighty." It's as if He's saying that what's impossible biologically is not impossible supernaturally.

Then God changes Abram's name to Abraham in verse 5. Abram means "exalted father"; Abraham means "father of a multitude." Talk about standing on the promises! Abraham's very name will remind him of God's promise that from this childless man will come a multitude.

God now informs Abraham in verses 9-14 about

the sign of this covenant—the sign of circumcision. The cutting away of the foreskin will distinguish the Jewish people from the surrounding nations. It will also remind them that God's promises are not dependent on their flesh, which is symbolically cut away in circumcision; no, this covenant is dependent on the promises of God.

In verse 15, the Lord changes Sarai's name to Sarah and promises her that *she* will deliver a son. The name Sarai refers to the princess of one family, while Sarah refers to the princess of many families.

God is stretching their faith! Abraham has a hard time believing it all, and he laughs and says to himself in verse 17:

*"Shall a child be born to a man  
who is a hundred years old? Shall  
Sarah, who is ninety years old,  
bear a child?"*

"I'm one hundred, and my wife is ninety. Lord, You have to be kidding!" But God isn't kidding.

And if I were God, I think I would have started over with somebody else—somebody more faithful! But thank God for His grace and patience with Abraham! And with Sarah. And with you and with me!

Despite the doubts and failures of His children, the Lord always keeps His promises. And beloved, we are in the best place possible when we trust Him—when we stand on the promises of God.

**What fears sneak into your life at times? How does God's Word address your fears?**

**Do you ever elevate your plans above God's? Why does this happen, and how can it be avoided?**

<sup>1</sup> R. Kelso Carter, "Standing on the Promises."

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## SODOM AND GOMORRAH

Genesis 18–19

Many people view God as *either* a God of love *or* a God of wrath. The Bible reveals God in all His fullness, as possessing various attributes, all perfect in nature and perfectly balanced with one another. We get a glimpse of this perfect combination in Genesis 18–19.

If you introduce God as a God of love to the average person, you'll get agreement. Introduce Him as a God of holiness—a God who created and defined sexual relationships—and many people won't want anything to do with God or you.

There's probably not a more disagreeable passage in the Bible to our world today than Genesis 18 and 19—God's judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But don't mistake God as one who takes pleasure in judgment. Second Peter 3:9 says, "The Lord . . . is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." God is both a just and holy God and a God of grace and forgiveness.

Genesis 18–19 gives us that kind of balanced, biblical view of God, as we see His character—His attributes—on full display. These chapters not only encourage us to walk with God but also remind us why we need to take a balanced message of repentance and forgiveness to our unbelieving world.

Genesis 18 opens with Abraham sitting at the door of his tent when he sees three men approaching. He invites them to stay for a home-cooked meal. These three men are actually two angels and the Lord, ap-

pearing as ordinary humans. In the Lord's case, this appearance is called a Christophany—a physical, preincarnate form of God the Son.

As they're eating, the Lord asks Abraham, in verse 9, "Where is Sarah your wife?" Abraham answers, "She is in the tent." The Lord knows that, and He also knows Sarah's listening; so, He says, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son" (verse 10).

*God is both a  
just and holy God  
and a God of grace  
and forgiveness.*

Sarah laughs and says to herself, in verse 12, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" The Lord then says to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? . . . Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (verses 13–14).



Sarah comes out of the tent and says, “I did not laugh.” The Lord responds, “No, but you did laugh” (verse 15).

He’s not going to allow her to get away with lying. But He’s also demonstrating that He not only knows her thoughts, but He’s also able to give this ninety-year-old woman and her one-hundred-year-old husband reason to start stocking up on diapers. What is impossible biologically at their age is not impossible by the power of God.

After their meal, Abraham walks along with the Lord and the angels, and Moses records in verse 16 that “they looked down toward Sodom.” Genesis 13:13 has already called the men of Sodom, “great sinners against the Lord,” so we sense God’s holy justice is stirring.

Here in Genesis 18:20, the Lord says, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave.” He isn’t acting on rumors or hearsay but on personal knowledge. He is an eyewitness to every sin.

Listen, the Lord not only knows the sin of these people; He knows your sin and mine. And the truth is, we can justify anything we do. I can convince myself that how I feel and what I’m doing is right. But God operates according to *His* righteousness. *He* defines what is right.

Now in verse 21 the Lord says to Abraham:

*“I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to me. And if not, I will know.”*

Now didn’t the Lord just read Sarah’s mind? Didn’t God know the sin of these people? Did He need to take a field trip down there to find out? No, this field trip isn’t to inform the Lord but to reassure Abraham that the evidence of Sodom’s sin is undeniable.

So, these two angels are sent ahead, and when they arrive at Sodom in Genesis 19:1, they find Lot sitting at the city gate. The administrative offices of a city

were built just inside the city gate, so Lot apparently holds a position of civil leadership.

Lot thinks these strangers are ordinary men, and he urges them to stay in his home overnight. Later that night, the men of Sodom surround Lot’s house and call out, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them” (verse 5). This verb “to know” is the same verb for a man having relations with his wife.

Lot goes outside and pleads with them in verse 7:

*“My brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.”*

Frankly, it’s hard to imagine Lot offering his daughters to these men—I wonder if these girls ever forgave him for that. But the men of Sodom aren’t interested in them. Instead, they accuse Lot of standing in judgment over them and their actions, and they begin to attack *him*.

But verses 10–11 tell us the angels pull Lot back inside the house to safety and then supernaturally blind the men outside. Only then do the angels reveal who



The area of Sodom as it looks today





they are and that they've come to rescue Lot and his family from God's coming judgment.

That judgment, as they flee the city, is described in verses 24–26:

*Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.*

God destroys these cities completely, and even Lot's wife loses her life, because she “looked back.” That refers to her lagging behind with a desire to go back. So, she is also judged for her rebellion against God.

God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone is an illustration of a coming day when God will judge all of unbelieving humanity. The truth is, we've all offended a holy God. We've all defied His righteous moral standards. This text isn't just a warning about homosexuality or incest or defiance; it's a warning that judgment is coming and none of us can live before a holy and just God unless someone pays the penalty for our sin.

And that's exactly what Jesus did for you and me; the record of our sins was nailed to His cross, Colossians 2:14 tells us. Jesus paid for your sins and mine. We can escape the holy justice of God—the fire and brimstone of an eternal hell (Revelation 21:8)—only by repenting of our sin and trusting in the Savior.

What happens to Lot and his two daughters? Well, these girls also defy God's pattern for sexual relations. They get their father drunk and lie with him. The final verses of Genesis 19 tell us they both have baby boys, and those boys become the founders of two idolatrous nations, Moab and Ammon. Those nations will become enemies of Israel for generations to come.

But even here, the grace of God is at work. You see, centuries later a woman named Ruth, from the nation of Moab, will turn from her idolatry and by the forgiving grace of God end up marrying an Israelite named Boaz and becoming an ancestor of Jesus the Messiah.

God's invitation is for us to turn from the idols of our sin and walk with Him, a God of justice, holiness, judgment, compassion, grace, and forgiveness.

Let's follow God's holy pattern for living. It's the only pattern that brings satisfaction and meaning and hope.

---

How does the righteousness of God affect your daily conduct and perspective on the world?

How have you seen God's compassion and grace in the midst of evil and hardship? What did it teach you about God and His ways?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

Genesis 20–21

It's comforting to know that through all our failures and faithlessness, God never changes. His promises will never be broken. The birth of Isaac is proof of that. God's work is not dependent on any of us, but He graciously allows us to be a part of His plan, as we follow Him.

Did you know that GPS systems have to be recalibrated every decade or so? That's because the earth's crust is actually moving, and without GPS recalibration, you wouldn't make it to the right address, and your packages would be delivered to your neighbor's house.

That reminds me that we need to periodically recalibrate our lives according to God's unchanging Word. Although the world around us is shifting and changing, God's promises never do.

Sometimes it seems like people are trying to keep God's promises from coming true. Here in Genesis 20, Abraham's lack of faith looks like it's going to

derail God's promise of a son through his wife Sarah (17:15-21). Abraham and Sarah have been waiting on that promise for decades.

Verse 1 says, "Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar."

Once again, in verse 2 Abraham tells the lie that Sarah is his sister in order to save his skin from the Philistine king, Abimelech. He's afraid the king will kill him to get his beautiful wife. Abraham pulled the same stunt earlier, in Egypt, for the same reason.

Now maybe the first time Abraham did this back in Egypt was understandable. He was fairly new to walking by faith. But he knows better now—some twenty-five years later. God has spoken directly to him many times since then, promising him that Sarah will have that promised son; and from that son will come a nation, and from that nation will come the Savior who will redeem mankind.

Now, in one sense Sarah *is* Abraham's sister. In verse 12 Abraham reveals that Sarah is his half-sister—they have the same father but different mothers. And as we've already explained, before the law of Moses was given, such marriages weren't forbidden as they are today—in order to protect us from a myriad of phys-



A well in Beersheba



ical problems that now occur in the offspring when close family members marry.

But Abraham is hiding behind this half-truth. The real truth is, he's afraid. He's not so confident that God's word is unchangeable.

Maybe you can point to times in your life when your faith was strong in God's promises, but also to other times when you've felt weak and faithless. Well, let me encourage you here that God's promises to Abraham aren't dependent on how strong Abraham is but on how strong God is. Even our failures can't derail God's promises.

*God's promises to Abraham aren't dependent on how strong Abraham is but on how strong God is.*

Now Genesis 20:2 tells us, "Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah." He's going to add her to his harem after all. But to his credit, he doesn't know she's married to Abraham.

But in verse 3, God comes to Abimelech in a dream and says, "You are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is [another] man's wife."

Verse 4 tells us that he hadn't touched her yet, and God says to him in verse 6, "It was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her." God tells Abimelech in his dream to give Sarah back to Abraham.

The king does so, and Abraham then acts in the role of a prophet of God and prays for Abimelech in verse 17. God is guarding Abraham and Sarah from any retaliation from this king.

Isn't it wonderful that the promises of God don't depend on your faithfulness but on His? Yes, your own sin and selfishness have consequences you might have to live with, but God isn't up in heaven wringing His hands, hoping you don't mess up His plans. My friend, even your sin isn't greater than God's power and mercy and grace.

Let me show you that God's promises can't be stopped by Sarah's jealousy.

Genesis 21 begins in the delivery room when God's promise is fulfilled and ninety-year-old Sarah delivers a baby boy. A one-hundred-year-old Abraham is out there in the waiting room dancing around with joy. They finally have their promised son, and Abraham names him Isaac.

Now Ishmael is around fifteen years old at the time. You remember, he's the offspring of Abraham and Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden whom Sarah had arranged in unbelief to bear a child for Abraham. Frankly, you can sympathize with Ishmael here; he's no longer the heir to Abraham's fortune. He's not part of the covenant promise of the Hebrew nation. And his resentment and unbelief is beginning to show.

We're told in verse 9 that Sarah sees him mocking Isaac. She is understandably upset, but then she demands that Abraham exile Hagar and Ishmael once and for all.

Abraham is torn by Sarah's sinful attitude toward his oldest son. But the Lord comes along and says to Abraham:

*"Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of [Hagar] also, because he is your offspring." (verses 12-13)*

Notice how gracious the Lord is with Ishmael. He's Abraham's son too, and he will be blessed to father a nation. Even though Isaac is the heir of the covenant promise, God has a plan for both Isaac *and* Ishmael.



It's easy to overlook the fact that neither of these boys had any say in the circumstances they were born into. But they did have a say in how they would respond to God; we'll learn that Ishmael will reject the God of Abraham, and Isaac will choose to follow Him.

Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away into the wilderness with the Lord's promise of taking care of them. But it isn't long before Hagar runs out of water in the wilderness of Beersheba, and she begins to weep. Frankly, it's a touching scene of despair.

God arrives in verse 19 and miraculously opens Hagar's eyes, and she sees a "well of water." She and her son are saved from certain death.

Chapter 21 goes on to tell us that Ishmael grew up and married a woman from Egypt, beginning a family that would eventually become the Arab nation. God's promises to him came true as well.

I can't help but feel for Hagar and Ishmael here. The wilderness can be a terribly lonely place. Maybe you're suffering right now in your own version of the "wilderness" and you're wondering about God's promises of caring for you and guiding you. The winds of doubt have blown the sands of despair in your eyes, and you can't see the way forward.

This is the best place to be reminded of the promises of God. Mistreatment, hopelessness, sinful people, or your own sinful failures cannot prevent the promises of God from being fulfilled.

Now at this point in Genesis 21, King Abimelech comes to Abraham and negotiates a peace treaty between his nation and Abraham. The peace treaty is ratified by Abimelech, giving Abraham a well, and Abraham gives Abimelech seven lambs as a "witness," or proof, of Abraham's ownership of the well.

Don't miss this significant moment: Abraham now owns a well and a plot of land. This is the first piece

of real estate he owns in the promised land—a land God was promising to Abraham and his descendants as an eternal inheritance.

Abraham plants a tree by this well and holds a worship service in honor of the Everlasting God.

And with that, Abraham is moving forward again in faith. You and I can do the same, not because we're without sin or because we're always faithful. We move forward by trusting the Word of God, which will not change—even though the very crust of the earth can't stop moving and shifting. We can trust in the Rock of Ages and His unchanging, faithful Word.

---

What actions in your life can be attributed to questioning God's promises? How can you foster greater trust in God's word?

What promises of God are most precious to you? How do they mold your outlook on life?

---



Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)







## SACRIFICING ISAAC

Genesis 22–23

The greatest challenge to Abraham's faith came from God Himself. Like Abraham, we soon learn that God's commands are not always easy to follow or even easy to understand. But also like Abraham, we need to learn that obedience is always right and always rewarded.

Genesis 22 records the great test of Abraham's faith. It also illustrates the future death of God's only Son, the Lord Jesus.

We read in verse 1, "After these things God tested Abraham." You need to understand that this is *not* a pop quiz. This is more like the *final exam* in God's curriculum of faith. And it appears that Abraham is ready and waiting. God says to him, in verse 2:

*"Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."*

Did you notice how the Lord describes Isaac here? "Your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love."

Mom and Dad had waited twenty-five years for this son of the promise to be born. And by now, Isaac is a young man. Many times over the years, Abraham must have told Isaac about the promised land and a nation and a coming Messiah through their descendants.

But now the Lord is asking Abraham to offer his son up as a sacrifice—literally, a burnt offering! Child

sacrifice had no part in worshiping God. The pagans did this, but not followers of Yahweh.

We would naturally expect to hear Abraham refuse this command, but instead we read in verse 3:

*So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.*

Verse 4 tells us it took almost three days to get to the place of sacrifice. Try to imagine what that



Infant burial jar from Ashkelon.



journey must have been like for this loving father. How many times did Abraham replay Isaac's childhood—his miracle birth, his first steps, the first time he said "Papa," those special times as Isaac grew into a God-honoring young man?

You can almost feel Abraham's agony in verse 5, as he tells the others to stay there, while he and Isaac go on up the hill.

In verse 6, we read:

*And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.*

Isaac no doubt had helped his father prepare many sacrifices before, because he notices that they have everything they need but the sacrificial animal. So, he asks in verse 7, "Where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

No doubt Abraham has to clear the lump in his throat as he replies, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son" (verse 8).

Now I believe Abraham is trusting God for one of two results: either God is going to provide an animal for the sacrifice, or Isaac is going to be miraculously resurrected right there on the spot. And we know this because Abraham told the others in verse 5 that he and Isaac were going to worship and that *they* would return.

Now, the narrative moves quickly:

*When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.* (verses 9-10)

By the way, don't overlook Isaac here. He's also trusting in the Lord's promise. This isn't just about Abraham's faith; it's about Isaac's as well.

There's no lamb miraculously waiting for them there. So, after some agonizing moments, Isaac—offering no resistance—is laid on this altar. No doubt, both Abraham and Isaac are struck by the gravity of this moment. You can almost see the reflection of the sun flashing off that sharpened blade, as Abraham raises it into the air.

And at the last moment, the Angel of the Lord—the Lord Himself—speaks:

*"Abraham, Abraham! ... Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."* (verses 11-12)

*This was to become  
a prophetic  
announcement of  
a future and final  
sacrifice; the Lamb  
had yet to arrive.*

Can you imagine the relief and joy that overwhelmed both Abraham and Isaac at this moment? They probably hugged one another through tears.

Then we read verse 13:

*Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as*

*a burnt offering instead of his son.*

Remember, Abraham had said earlier, in verse 8, that God would provide a lamb. But God provided a ram instead. Why? Because this was to become a prophetic announcement of a future and final sacrifice; the Lamb had yet to arrive.

Jesus will be introduced by John the Baptist as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). This is his announcement that the Lamb has finally arrived! Isaiah prophesied of the suffering Messiah in Isaiah 53:5-6:

*But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Oh yes, God provided the Lamb. And what a phenomenal picture Isaac and Abraham make here of God the Father and God the Son. Just as Isaac is placed upon wood, on that altar of sacrifice, so also, Jesus is placed upon a wooden cross, which was nothing less than an altar of sacrifice.

Furthermore, Isaac willingly lays down his life just as the cross of Christ shows us the Lord’s willingness to die. Philippians 2:8 says that Jesus, “humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Now all this took place on Mount Moriah, which is identified later as the place where the temple was built in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1). Moriah is actually a

ridge, and on this same mountain ridge is a place that will become known as Golgotha (John 19:17).

Beloved, the place where Isaac is offered is the same area where Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, would die. I wouldn’t be surprised at all to find out one day that it’s the exact same spot.

After the ram is sacrificed, the Angel of the Lord restates the covenant promise to Abraham in verses 17 and 18:

*“I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring ... and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”*

This is a prophetic promise that includes the coming Messiah, who will be a blessing to all the nations of the world.

Now as chapter 23 opens, we’re told that Sarah dies. In that day, people were buried in the land of their birth, which for Sarah would’ve been back in the land of Ur. But Abraham buys the cave of Machpelah in the promised land in which to bury his wife.

This is another act of faith. Abraham is buying more real estate, believing God’s promise that this land will indeed belong to him and his descendants.

And my friend, in the coming kingdom of Christ on earth, the final fulfillment of God’s promise will come to pass as all this land will belong to Israel permanently, without any objections or hesitation.

---

How has God worked in your life to equip you to face severe challenges to your faith?

How does the experience of Abraham and Isaac give you a fresh perspective on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## FINDING A BRIDE FOR ISAAC

Genesis 24–25:18

Abraham's effort to find a wife for Isaac illustrates a great truth: We are to obey God and act responsibly, but He accomplishes His purposes in His way. This is not only an incentive for faithfulness but also a comfort to us when His work is not immediately seen.

I love to watch the suspense that builds during an Olympic relay race. If a team is to win the race, each runner must carry the baton and then smoothly pass it along to the next runner.

Well here in Genesis chapter 24, we witness the passing of the baton, and it's going to be a clean handoff of God's covenant promises from Abraham to his son Isaac.

Now don't misunderstand; the only hope for a clean handoff ultimately rests in the providence of God. Providence refers to God's work of moving everything into place so that His promises are fulfilled at just the right time, in the right way, for the right reason, involving the right people. You could write in your Bibles above Genesis chapters 24 and 25, "The Providence of God."

Genesis 24 opens by telling us that Abraham is "well advanced in years." He's just buried his wife, Sarah, and his forty-year-old son Isaac is a single man.

Now if God's promises are going to pass on to Isaac and his children, Isaac obviously needs a wife. So, Abraham calls for his chief of staff, so to speak, his household administrator, Eliezer (Genesis 15:2), to go on a mission to find a wife for Isaac from their extended family and certainly *not* from among the unbelieving Canaanites.

Eliezer asks Abraham what he's to do if the woman he finds refuses to come back with him. Abraham answers here in verse 7:

*The God of heaven ... will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.*



One of the earliest known depictions of a camel.





In other words, he's saying, "We're going to set sail, but we're going to let God steer the boat."

So, Eliezer leaves the promised land and travels back to the region of Abraham's family. And here we see the providence of God at work.

He arrives at a watering hole used by the townspeople, and he prays:

*"O LORD ... I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac."* (verses 12-14)

And what happens? "Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah . . . came out" (verse 15). Don't you wish all your prayers were answered that quickly? Rebekah does exactly what Eliezer just prayed the woman of God's choice would do as a sign from God.

As soon as Rebekah finishes watering the camels, he gives her some gifts and then asks her about her family. And in verse 24 Rebekah informs Eliezer that she isn't just a member of Abraham's tribe; she's the daughter of Abraham's nephew, Bethuel.

And Eliezer just breaks out into a little worship dance here in verse 27:

*"Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham ... the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen."*

Now notice the providence of God here. He's led Eliezer to the right place, at the right time, and to the right person.

Well, Rebekah runs home and brings back her brother Laban, who invites Eliezer home for dinner. But he refuses to eat one bite until he informs them of his mission.

From verse 34 through verse 49, he retells all the details that have led him to the point of meeting Rebekah. And by the way, as Eliezer delivers his account, he emphasizes at several places that this was the providential work of God

So, what's her father's reaction? Well, you husbands probably remember meeting your future bride's father and how you swallowed the lump in your throat as you asked him if you could marry his daughter. I followed my future father-in-law down into the basement where I could get him alone. Fortunately, Mr. Gladney said that I could indeed marry his daughter Marsha, and she's been my bride now for forty plus years.

*The providence of  
God is evident  
in all this.*

In verse 50, Bethuel, along with Laban, agree to the proposal, and in no time Eliezer and Rebekah take off for her future home in the land of promise.

We're not given many details, but it appears it was love at first sight for Isaac. We're told in verse 67 that Isaac took Rebekah as his wife and "loved her."

The providence of God is evident in all this, and it doesn't end with a wedding. Look at chapter 25 and verse 8:

*Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old*



*man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.*

In Genesis 15:15, God had promised Abraham he would live to “a good old age,” and God’s faithfulness to His promise never wavered.

Genesis 25:9-10 tells us, “Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah . . . with Sarah his wife.” This cave is in the land God promised to Abraham a hundred years earlier! How long have you been waiting on the promises of God? We would all like God’s answers to arrive like they did for Eliezer—while he was still praying. But for Abraham, it took a hundred years to see this piece of God’s puzzle put into place—and the puzzle still isn’t finished being put together.

Now as you’re waiting on the Lord, don’t just sit around doing nothing.

Let me point out four different tools we need to be using as we wait on God to providentially fulfill His plans for us at the right time, in the right way, and for the right reason.

The first tool to activate is *faith*. When Eliezer asks Abraham what he should do if the woman he finds refuses to come back with him, Abraham responds in faith, saying they’re just going to trust that the Lord will go before him.

In other words, do what you’re supposed to do, and leave the rest to God. As Hudson Taylor, the great missionary said, “If you are simply obeying the Lord, all the responsibility will rest on Him, not on you!”<sup>1</sup>

The second tool to activate is *prayer*. When Eliezer reaches Abraham’s hometown, he prays specifically, boldly, and with humility, “Lord, make Your will clearly known to me, so that I can obey You.”

The third tool to activate is *worship*. After God reveals that Rebekah is the one for Isaac, Eliezer stops and worships God. So often we get some answer to prayer and we want to call somebody or print the story in the church newsletter without even stopping to thank God and worship Him.

The fourth tool to activate is *obedience*. Eliezer is obedient to Abraham; Abraham is obedient to God. But what about Rebekah? We often overlook her courageous obedience. Even through her family wants Eliezer to delay returning with her for at least ten days, Eliezer wants to leave the day following his arrival. Finally, the family asks Rebekah if she’s willing to go this soon. Can you imagine leaving your family, friends—your world—to go with someone you met just the day before? I love her response in chapter 24 and verse 58; she replies with three simple words: “I will go.”

While you’re waiting on the Lord’s clear providential leading, my friend, you can stay busy with these four tools: faith, prayer, worship, and obedience.

Maybe this is the perfect time for you to unlock that toolbox in your heart and get busy using these tools for the glory of God.

---

What encouragement do you find in knowing God is always providentially at work in the world?

How have you seen God’s providence at work in your life?

---

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor and China’s Open Century, Book Three: If I Had a Thousand Lives* (Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1982), 454.

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## JACOB AND ESAU

Genesis 25:19–28:9

Jacob's deception of his father certainly is a low point in his life, but the others involved in this episode are equally at fault. Their actions provide a solemn warning that seeking *our* will in *our* way is a sure path to strife, bitterness, and heartache.

In our study in these chapters of Genesis, we're going to watch different people react to God's revealed plan, and we're going to see the price they pay for doing things their own way.

Now after twenty years of marriage (Genesis 25:20, 26), Isaac and Rebekah haven't had a child, and God's covenant promise to raise up a nation through them seems to be fading. So, Isaac prays to the Lord, and God responds; it isn't long before his wife is expecting twin boys (verse 21).

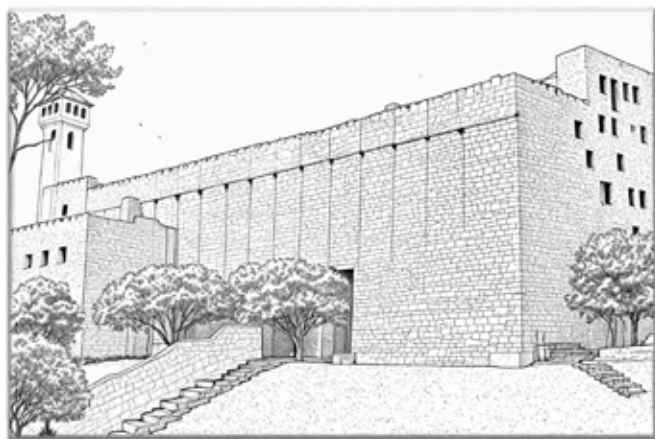
Maybe Isaac shouldn't have prayed so hard. My wife and I have twin sons, and it wasn't always a double blessing; sometimes it was just double the diapers

and double the baby food and double the crying at night when they would wake each other up. It eventually got easier—when they left for college. I'm teasing—sort of.

Well, long before these twin boys here in chapter 25 double the workload in the nursery, they're already causing trouble in the womb. It's a wrestling match in there!

Rebekah asks the Lord about it, and He says to her:

*"Two nations are in your womb,  
and two peoples from within you  
shall be divided; the one shall be  
stronger than the other, the older  
shall serve the younger."* (verse 23)



The traditional site of Abram's tomb in Hebron.

That's quite a revelation to Isaac and Rebekah. God's going to skip over the firstborn and raise up the Hebrew nation from the second born, to whom He's giving His covenant blessing.

So, on delivery day, Esau emerges from the womb first, but his little brother's hand is grasping his heel. "Jacob," the name given to the younger son, means "heel-catcher" and describes one who tries to get in



front. Jacob's going to live up to that name.

Esau grows up to become a hunter, but Jacob prefers a quiet life at home, which would involve shepherding. We're told in verse 28 that Isaac especially loves Esau and Rebekah especially loves Jacob. That clues us in on this being a house full of favoritism, and that will create nothing but trouble in *any* home.

Verse 29 tells us that one day Esau comes home hungry and begs Jacob for some of the homemade stew he's prepared. And Jacob decides *this* is the moment he's going to get the birthright, the inheritance of the firstborn.

Now remember, Jacob doesn't need to manipulate Esau to obtain this because God already told Isaac and Rebekah that the older brother is going to serve the younger. But Jacob wants to be in control now, so in verse 31 he says to Esau, "Sell me your birthright now." That means today!

The birthright gave the son a double portion of the inheritance. It also gave the heir the right to assume the role of family priest, prior to the law being delivered and the priesthood established. So, this birthright was as much a spiritual inheritance as a financial one.

And right there at the kitchen counter, Esau agrees to sell it for a bowl of stew. Verse 34 tells us he "despised his birthright"; in other words, he didn't care at all about spiritual things.

Chapter 26 opens with a famine taking over the land and Isaac taking his family to Gerar. That's the same place Abraham and Sarah had gone back in chapter 20. And Isaac tells the very same lie his father had told. He says that Rebekah is his sister out of fear the men of that place might kill him in order to take Rebekah if they thought the two were married.

Fortunately, the next few verses tell us the king figures out they aren't brother and sister at all—they were evidently getting along too well with each other. He warns his people not to touch either Isaac or Rebekah.

Now why would Moses record this episode here, which is so similar to Abraham's sin? Well for one thing, it demonstrates that human nature doesn't

change from generation to generation. We're still sinners. The human race can improve on just about everything—except the human race.

But this also demonstrates that God's faithfulness to His promises won't change. His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and their descendants doesn't depend on their faithfulness but on His.

Now that doesn't excuse Isaac and Rebekah or Jacob and Esau—they should have joined the Lord in His plans rather than substitute their own plans and disobey God. But the point remains: nothing is going to derail the plan of God.

Now we come to the last two verses of chapter 26, and they sum up the defiance and unbelief in the heart of Esau:

*When Esau was forty years old,  
he took Judith . . . to be his wife,  
and Basemath . . . and they made  
life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.*

(verses 34-35)

These are pagan Hittite women. It's a heartbreak for any godly parents—as it was for Isaac and Rebekah—to see their child marry an unbeliever. Many of you might be praying that God will save your extended family members and bring them to faith in Christ; keep on loving them and praying for them.

In chapter 27, we find that Isaac is now old and blind and believes that death is near. And instead of calling for Jacob to receive the covenant blessings, he calls for his godless son Esau. Isaac clearly is determined to disobey the revealed will of God. In verses 3-4 he tells Esau to go hunting and then prepare his favorite dinner; afterward he'll transfer the covenant blessings to Esau.

The bestowing of the firstborn blessing was a public celebration of God's faithfulness to the family. But Isaac knows what he's doing isn't God's will, so he's going to do this privately.

Now Rebekah's been listening through the kitchen





window, evidently. She knows what Isaac is planning, but she doesn't ask God to intervene. Instead, she comes up with her own devious plan. And Jacob goes along with it. His only question in verse 12 is essentially, "What happens if I get caught?" And Rebekah answers in verse 13 that she will bear the consequences of their deception. And my friend, she will indeed pay a heavy price.

So, Rebekah cooks up Isaac's favorite meal, and Jacob dresses up in Esau's clothing. And this ploy completely fools Isaac.

Again, keep in mind that the Lord has already chosen Jacob for this blessing. God would have worked out the details without this sinful deception, which is going to divide this family for the rest of their lives.

*God would have  
worked out the de-  
tails without this  
sinful deception...*

Isaac blesses Jacob, thinking he is Esau. But Esau soon finds out what has happened, and verse 41 tells us, "Esau hated Jacob" and planned to kill him as soon as Isaac passed away.

Rebekah learns of Esau's intentions, and again, instead of asking God for wisdom, she convinces Isaac to send Jacob out of town—back to their extended family—to find a wife. Rebekah, who so loved and favored Jacob, will never see him again.

Rebekah's manipulation, Jacob's deception, Isaac's defiance of God's revealed will, and Esau's rejection

of spiritual things are all going to bring much sorrow, pain, and division. Sir Walter Scott famously wrote, "Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive."

Now God gave these biographical sketches as warnings to us. Hold these chapters up like a mirror, and take a look:

- Maybe you see yourself in Isaac, resisting God's will because you want something different than God wants.
- Maybe you see yourself in Rebekah, who manipulated people rather than prayed to God.
- Do you see yourself in Jacob, deceiving rather than waiting on God's timing?
- Or maybe you see yourself in Esau, whose immediate appetites were more important than spiritual priorities.

Let's learn from their tragic decisions and be encouraged to honestly and patiently wait on God and trust His timing.

---

How can you guard against the  
attitude and practice of favoritism?

Do you find God's will conflicting with  
your own will at times? What is the  
proper response when this occurs?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## JACOB MEETS HIS MATCH

Genesis 28:10–31:16

We can rejoice in God's promises, knowing He is always faithful. But this doesn't keep us from suffering the consequences of our own sinful actions. Jacob was uniquely blessed by God, but he and his family suffered needlessly because of his selfish decisions.

Jacob is now running for his life because Esau is making plans to kill him. He's being sent to safety, to the family home of his mother Rebekah in Mesopotamia, five hundred miles away.

Now it's a long journey alone, and as Jacob is camping out one night, he has a dream that sets the stage for everything that will happen to him for the rest of his life. In Genesis 28, that dream is described in

verses 12-15, as Jacob sees a ladder descending from heaven and hears the promises of God being repeated to him.

Let me tell you something. Jacob has essentially ruined just about everything he's touched. He's deceived and divided his family. Now while he's out here in the wilderness alone, God shows up in this dream to reassure Jacob that He will keep His promises. God will bless Jacob in spite of Jacob!



A memorial pillar used to mark a significant event

The Lord wants Jacob—and all of us—to grasp the truth that when your sin drives you into a spiritual wilderness, God's grace can still reach you there.

Right now, you might be experiencing the consequences of your sin. You're in the wilderness, so to speak. God knows what you've done; God knows where you are. And you're not beyond the reach of His grace.

God's not going to show up in a dream of a ladder from heaven but in the truth of His Word. He's closer to you than you might think. Indeed, as the old song goes, "He's only a prayer away." Pray right now, confessing your sin to Jesus Christ—no matter where you are, no matter how far you've strayed from Him.

Well here, in this dramatic dream, the Lord repeats to Jacob the covenant promises. God gave the same promises to Abraham back in chapter 12 and then to Isaac in chapter 26—the promises of a literal land, a literal nation, and a literal blessing through Israel that will one day impact the entire earth.

In chapter 29 Jacob arrives at his ancestral homeland in Haran. Almost immediately, the prettiest girl in the place shows up, and she just happens to be his cousin. Jacob is invited to stay with his Uncle Laban and work for him, tending his flocks.



We read in verse 15 that after about a month Laban hires Jacob permanently. In fact, he asks Jacob to name his wages.

Well, Jacob doesn't want money. He wants to marry Laban's daughter, and he offers to work for seven years for Rachel's hand in marriage. Laban agrees, and after seven years, he finances a huge wedding party. But he secretly switches the bride, who would have been completely veiled, and the next morning Jacob is in for the wedding surprise of the century. It isn't Rachel lying next to him; it's her older sister, Leah.

Naturally, Jacob is furious and confronts his uncle:

*Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" Laban said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn." (verses 25-26)*

In other words, "That's not how we do it here in Mesopotamia."

Let me tell you, Jacob the deceiver has just been out-deceived. Jacob had taken advantage of his father Isaac who couldn't see well; and Laban has taken advantage of the fact that Jacob couldn't see in that dark wedding tent. Jacob had pretended to be his older brother, and now Leah has pretended to be her younger sister.

That's what you call getting a dose of your own medicine!

After a heated exchange, Laban agrees to give Rachel to Jacob, but only if Jacob promises to work for him on the family farm for another seven years. Jacob agrees. Verse 30 reads:

*So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.*

Now that phrase, "he loved Rachel more than Leah," sets the tone for a truckload of family problems. We begin in verses 31-32:

*When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me."*

The Lord then gives Jacob three more sons by Leah. By the way, in spite of Jacob, God is fulfilling His promise in giving him a growing family.

But the problems are growing too. Genesis 30:1 says:

*When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!"*

What's he supposed to do about her jealousy? Well, Rachel has a solution; she gives Jacob her maid Bilhah that she might bear children on Rachel's behalf. Jacob goes along with the plan, and Bilhah has two sons.

Then when Leah ceases having children, she gives Jacob her maid Zilpah, who bears Jacob two more sons.

Beloved, this chapter isn't a manual on marriage and family. God reports what's going on and works in spite of it, but He isn't condoning polygamy and adultery. This passage is filled with intrigue, manipulation, competition, and greed.

God uses the sinful decisions of all involved ultimately to produce the twelve sons of Jacob, but that's something God could have done had Jacob been faithful to one wife, according to God's design. In fact, keep in mind that Leah, Jacob's first wife, is the woman who



bears Judah, and Judah will become the royal tribe from which the promised Messiah will come.

After twenty years of these women competing against each other, Leah has six sons (and one daughter), Bilhah has two sons, Zilpah has two sons, and Rachel, finally, has one son, Joseph.

*Where sin increased,  
the apostle Paul  
wrote, grace  
abounded more  
(Romans 5:20).*

Again, the timeless principle here is that God's grace and goodness can intersect your life, not because you've been faithful, but in spite of the fact that you haven't. I'm not trying to justify sin here; I'm trying to exalt the grace of God. Where sin increased, the apostle Paul wrote, grace abounded more (Romans 5:20).

Now back here in Genesis 30:25, Jacob is ready to leave town. But Laban knows Jacob's been good for the family business, so he urges Jacob to stay and set his own wages.

Jacob tells Laban he'll stay if he can keep any speckled and spotted sheep and goats, and all the black sheep that are born. Laban quickly agrees because this gives him the advantage since most sheep are white and most goats are black or brown.

Now people often are confused by what Jacob does in verse 37. Jacob is simply employing an old supersti-

tion by peeling rods of certain trees and placing them before the flocks as they mate. In other words, he's not trusting God; he's up to his old tricks.

Amazingly, Jacob's flocks multiply. God blesses Jacob's flocks, not because of his superstition but in spite of it.

As we come to Genesis 31, we find Laban's sons accusing Jacob of stealing their inheritance. Even Laban is becoming hostile, as he sees Jacob prospering in spite of his efforts to take advantage of Jacob's labor. Those deceptive efforts, Jacob says, included Laban changing his wages ten times (verse 7). Jacob certainly has met his match in old Uncle Laban.

Finally, the Lord speaks to Jacob in verse 3 and says, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." That's all Jacob needs to hear.

God is going to continue to be faithful to Jacob in prospering him and protecting him, not because Jacob deserves it but because God has promised it.

That's grace. Sin abounded, but God's grace abounded more.

---

What principles should always guide  
your family relationships?

How have you seen God's grace at  
work in your life through the years?  
How does this shape your perspective  
on the challenges you face?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)







## FROM JACOB TO ISRAEL

Genesis 31:17–32:32

The most significant changes in our lives often take place gradually over time. God works with us and in us to bring us to a greater awareness of His presence and the preeminent place He should hold in our lives. This is the testimony of Jacob, the man called Israel.

We begin our study in Genesis 31:17, as Jacob gathers all his family and belongings and secretly departs for Canaan. But three days later, Uncle Laban, who's been away shearing his sheep, discovers that Jacob is gone.

He's infuriated that Jacob would sneak off with his daughters and his grandchildren and all his flocks and herds. But Jacob has every reason to try to avoid a confrontation. He knows that greedy old Laban isn't about to let him go and could very well do him harm.

In fact, that seems to be Laban's intention because God speaks to Laban in a dream he has while he's pursuing Jacob, saying, "Be careful not to say any-

thing to Jacob, either good or bad." The Hebrew expression forbids threatening Jacob with harm. Laban obviously has been planning to threaten Jacob's life unless he returns.

It takes seven days for Laban to finally overtake Jacob. When he does, he immediately accuses Jacob of abducting his daughters and family and stealing his belongings. He asserts his right to punish Jacob but then recounts the Lord's warning to him in the dream. Jacob proclaims his innocence and fires back in verse 41 that Laban has been cheating him for years.

But rather than coming to blows, as we might expect at this point, Laban and Jacob make an agreement, which is detailed in verses 45-53. They erect a heap of stones as testimony to their covenant and to serve as a boundary marker separating the families.

Following their agreement, they settle down and end up eating one last meal together. The next morning Laban kisses his daughters and grandchildren goodbye; and with that, the old deceiver Laban returns home, and we never hear about him again.

But God isn't finished with the younger deceiver yet. He's still working on Jacob, developing his trust and faith in the promises of God.



Many ancient families collected stone ancestor images.



You see, Jacob is traveling back home as the heir of the covenant promises. But danger is waiting just around the corner. His older brother, Esau, who had vowed to kill him twenty years earlier, stands between Jacob and the promised land.

As chapter 32 begins, Jacob is visited by angels again. Their appearance encourages him, giving him assurance of God's protection.

To Jacob's credit, he takes the initiative and sends messengers to tell Esau that he's coming home. When he hears in verse 6 that Esau is coming out to meet him, he assumes that isn't good news. For all he knows, Esau is coming to kill him.

So, Jacob does what you and I would have done—he starts praying. Importantly, in verse 10 Jacob admits to God that he's not worthy of God's blessing. And that's a great way to pray.

*Jacob admits to God that he's not worthy of God's blessing. And that's a great way to pray.*

Then in verse 13 he starts sending gifts to Esau—hundreds of animals from his flocks and herds. He's going to try to soften Esau up with a wagon train of gifts.

Verse 23 tells us Jacob also took his family and “sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had.” At this point, Jacob is alone by the brook called Jabbok. Ironically, the word *Jabbok* means “emptying.” This is where Jacob is emptied of every scheme and every manipulation and every plan. No doubt he's terrified. He's reached a point in his life where he's helpless. And it's at this moment, the Lord comes to meet him.

Verse 24 tells us, “A man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.” Hosea 12:4 reveals that this wrestler was actually “*the* angel.” This is what we call a Christophany, a preincarnate appearance of Christ, who often appears as the “Angel of the Lord” in the Old Testament.

This wrestling match lasts several hours. In verse 26, at some point in the struggle, Jacob says, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

What we see here is Jacob clinging to the one he now recognizes as the only one who can bless him: God Himself. He isn't trying to win a wrestling match to get a blessing from a man. He's seeking the blessing of the preincarnate Redeemer, the Son of God.

We might not be wrestling with the Lord physically, but we might be wrestling with Him spiritually and emotionally. And what Jacob does in his wrestling match is exactly what you and I need to do to experience the blessing of God.

First of all, Jacob recognizes the *presence* of God in his life. In verse 27, the Lord asks Jacob, “What is your name?” Now He knows Jacob's name. But the meanings of Old Testament names are significant, and He's effectively asking, “What kind of man are you, that I should bless you?”

And Jacob answers, “Jacob.” That is, “I'm that heel-catcher; I'm the one who's always fighting to be in control.”

The Lord replies in verse 28, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel.” Israel literally means “God fights.” In other words, “Your name will no longer mean that *you* seek to be in control but that *God* will be in control.”

And with that, Jacob says in verse 29, “Please tell me your name.” His request is ignored, as God the Son then blesses Jacob.

In verse 30 we read that Jacob names the place “Peniel,” which means “the face of God.” Jacob knows he's been in the presence of the Lord.

In fact, this encounter will profoundly mark a difference in Jacob's life as he moves forward, recognizing



that God is active and present in his life. And my friend, you too will be blessed in life when you understand that God is at work—a very present help in your life—especially, in time of trouble.

So, Jacob first recognizes the presence of God in his life.

Second, Jacob recognizes the *preeminence* of God in his life. There's no room here for pride. Jacob doesn't say, "I've seen God, and was He ever impressed with me!" No, he says in verse 30, "I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." Those who truly walk with God aren't impressed with themselves, but with God alone.

Verse 31 says, "The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip." In that wrestling match, the Lord had wounded Jacob's hip, and he's now going to limp for the rest of his life. This will be a daily reminder that God met with him and changed him. And by the way, we never hear Jacob complain about that limp.

Jacob, the deceiver, has been given a new name—Israel—and he now has a new appreciation for God's presence and God's preeminence.

If you belong to Jesus Christ you've also been given a new name—Christian. You're a Christian, because your life is bound up in the person and the presence of your Savior, Jesus Christ.

As Genesis 32 comes to a close, I want you to picture Jacob here. He's a changed man. Watch him as he limps forward to meet his brother, Esau, whom he deceived twenty years earlier. This time Jacob doesn't have any plans up his sleeve; he's trusting that God will fight for him. His name is Israel, and he's more aware than ever, with each painful, limping stride, that God is present and God is preeminent in his life.

And there's no better way to limp through life than to

limp forward, trusting in your faithful Lord.

---

When do you most sense the presence of God in your life? What does this teach you?

In what ways do you "wrestle" with God? What does this tell you about yourself and your relationship to the Lord?

---



Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## JACOB'S RETURN

Genesis 33–36

A life of faith is not a life of comfort. Our faith will be severely tested. Sins from our past can have lingering consequences. We are not spared tragedy and loss. Yet Jacob's experiences remind us that it is walking by faith that gives us a God-honoring legacy.

On our Wisdom Journey in Genesis 33 through 36, we're going to uncover three realities about our faith as we learn to walk with God. They will be demonstrated here in the life of Jacob.

The first reality is that *your faith is going to develop inconsistently*.

Now I imagine Jacob's knees are knocking as he walks toward Esau here in chapter 33. It's been twenty years since he had run for his life after he had deceived Esau and Esau had vowed to kill him.

He's naturally expecting the worst, but verse 4 surprises us: "Esau ran to meet him and embraced him and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept." That was unexpected!

After these long-separated brothers dry their tears, Jacob introduces his family to Esau. He says in verse 5, "[These are] the children whom God has graciously given your servant." Again, in verse 11 Jacob says to Esau, "God has dealt graciously with me." This doesn't sound like the old conniving Jacob but like a man of faith.

After this reconciliation with his brother, Jacob moves on to the land of promise and settles near the town of Shechem. We're told at the end of chapter 33

that Jacob buys some real estate and builds an altar to thank God for bringing him safely home.

Now Moses, the author, pulls over for a chapter and describes a tragic incident where Jacob doesn't act very much like a man of faith. It all begins in Genesis 34 when Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah, unwisely goes out one day "to see the [Canaanite] women of the land" (verse 1).

Shechem, the son of Hamor, the ruler of the city, sees Dinah, and verse 2 records the dreadful news that "he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her." Jacob hears about the rape of Dinah, but strangely he doesn't do anything about it. He seems afraid to confront Hamor and his son. Well, the sons of Jacob aren't afraid—that's for sure. We're told in verse 7 that they are enraged.

When Shechem wants to marry Dinah and he and



Rings of silver discovered in Egypt





his father, Hamor, arrive to negotiate a marriage dowry, Jacob remains silent and allows his sons to “negotiate” with these wicked men. Verse 13 tells us, they “answered Shechem and his father Hamor deceitfully, because he had defiled their sister Dinah.” They appear to agree to this marriage, but they add the condition that all the men in the city of Shechem must be circumcised in order to intermarry with the family of Jacob (verse 15).

Well, Hamor thinks this is worth the trouble. In a conversation with the men of the city, Hamor and Shechem encourage them to go through with the proposed agreement. In verse 23 they argue, “Will not their livestock, their property and all their beasts be ours? Only let us agree with them, and they will dwell with us.” In other words, “Let’s get circumcised and intermarry, and we’ll eventually have everything they own.” These men have a deceptive plan of their own.

But as the men of the city are recovering from surgery, verses 25–26 record that two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, “took their swords and came against the city while it felt secure and killed all the males. They . . . took Dinah out of Shechem’s house and went away.”

The people of Shechem effectively reap the judgment of God for their wickedness and their deceptive intentions against God’s people. Simeon and Levi are hardly innocent, though. Jacob rebukes them and fears serious consequences from their actions.

Now chapter 35 opens with God telling Jacob to go back to Bethel, which is a special place of communion with God. Jacob obeys the Lord and speaks to all his household in verse 3:

*“Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, so that I may make there an altar to the God who answers me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone.”*

Even though his faith has been uneven and inconsistent, Jacob declares that the Lord has been with him all along and is worthy of worship and trust. In fact, he challenges his household in verse 2, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you and purify yourselves.” He’s saying, “Let’s make a definitive stand for the Lord.”

Jacob’s walk with God isn’t going to be a secret. He’s not like many Christians today who are secret agents for God—so secret nobody knows they’re Christians! If people in your world don’t know you’re a Christian, it’s not because the timing isn’t right; it’s because you don’t want the truth to get out.

Now in verse 11, God repeats the covenant promises to Jacob:

*“I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.”*

*None of this will happen because Jacob was an unwavering example of faith but because God’s promises are unwavering.*



These are promises of literal blessing. Some theologians want to spiritualize these away and water them down, but they're promises of a literal land, literal kings, and ultimately a literal Messiah, the King of Israel, who will literally descend from Jacob's family.

And none of this will happen because Jacob was an unwavering example of faith but because God's promises are unwavering. Jacob's faith developed inconsistently and unevenly, just like yours and mine.

The second reality is that *your faith will be tested regularly*.

Somebody once said that your greatest test of faith is your next one. And that's true. Jacob now experiences the loss of his beloved Rachel, as recorded here in chapter 35:

*Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor... the midwife said to her, 'Do not fear, for you have another son. And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.* (verses 16-18)

No doubt weeping, Jacob names this little boy, Benjamin, "son of the right hand." This boy belongs at the right hand, the place of honor.

I can't imagine what it would be like to be handed a new baby while at the same time losing your beloved wife. Perhaps you've experienced this great sorrow and can understand Jacob's great test of faith here in the plan of God for his life.

The third reality of faith, seen in the life of Jacob, is that *your faith will leave behind a legacy*.

Verses 23-26 of Genesis 35 lists the names of Jacob's twelve sons. From these twelve sons, the twelve tribes of Israel will descend, and from one of them, Judah, the Savior will be born.

Esau's legacy is recorded next; in fact, all of chapter 36 is a list of his descendants. And let me tell you, it's a legacy of unbelief. His descendants, known as the Edomites, will become enemies of Israel and enemies of God. One day in the distant future, King Herod, a descendant of Esau, will order the deaths of all the baby boys in Bethlehem in his attempt to wipe out the newborn Messiah.

At the end of your life, you will leave a legacy. It's not going to be measured by the size of your bank account or the square footage of your house; it will be measured by the depth of your faith and trust in God's plans for your life.

Yes, your faith will grow inconsistently, and it'll be tested regularly. But you can leave behind a legacy of walking with God and trusting His plans for your life.

---

Does the uneven growth of Jacob's faith mirror your own experience?  
What encouragement does the life of Jacob give to you?

What kind of spiritual legacy are you creating right now? What specific steps can you take to develop and enhance that legacy?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THE SALE OF JOSEPH & THE SIN OF JUDAH

Genesis 37–38

Temptation takes many forms and is never far from us. Sadly, we can unwittingly create temptations for others by our own unwise actions. Jacob failed to understand that favoritism breeds jealousy, and jealousy leads to a host of other sins.

As we set sail through Genesis 37–38, these chapters are going to expose once again the unfaithfulness of Jacob’s family and the faithfulness of God.

And here our attention turns to the eleventh son of Jacob, a young man named Joseph. Genesis 37:2 tells us he’s a teenager, and he’s out with his brothers shepherding their flocks. He sees his brothers misbehaving and goes home and tattles on them. Now I had younger brothers growing up, and nothing irritated me more than when they tattled on me (I was usually in enough trouble already).

Now to make matters worse, we’re told in verse 3, “Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than any other of his sons.” No doubt this was at least in part because Joseph was the firstborn of his beloved wife, Rachel, who had died some years earlier.

Jacob gives Joseph a special, long-sleeved coat of many colors (verse 3). This tunic would have communicated the position of a supervisor and indicated Jacob’s preferential treatment of placing Joseph first, as it were, in line. No wonder we read in verse 4 that his brothers hated him.

The next few verses tell us that Joseph had two dreams, which he naively shared with his family. Both dreams portrayed his family bowing down to him. He proba-



Image from the tomb of Beni Hassan showing Semitic merchants coming down to Egypt

bly should have kept these dreams to himself. In fact, verse 5 tells us that as a result his brothers “hated him even more.”

Now sometime later, Jacob sends Joseph to check on his brothers who are out in the fields. When they see him coming, they conspire together here in verse 20, saying,

*“Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.”*

The eldest brother, Reuben, talks them out of killing Joseph with their own hands. He convinces them to



just throw him into a pit and let him die there. However, we discover in verse 22 that Reuben planned to come back later and rescue Joseph from the pit.

While Joseph is in that pit begging for mercy and his brothers are eating dinner—if you can imagine that—a band of merchants come by on their way to Egypt. Reuben evidently has left dinner for a while, and Judah suggests they sell Joseph to these merchants. And before you know it, Joseph is heading to Egypt to be sold as a slave.

When Reuben returns and discovers what has happened, he says, “The boy is gone, and I, where shall I go?” (verse 30). Reuben is the firstborn son, and he’s going to be held responsible; he might even lose his inheritance. So, he joins his brothers in a plan to deceive their father.

Here’s the plan: They rip up Joseph’s tunic and spread some goat’s blood on it. And when they present it to their father, Jacob assumes that his son has been killed by a wild animal (verses 31–33).

This divided, deceitful, hateful family is the family chosen by God to give the world the nation Israel, and the coming Redeemer.

There must be a better family for God to deal with! Oh, but listen: there isn’t one family on the planet that deserves God’s grace, not your family and not mine. We have received from God far more than we

deserve. We’re all sinners, in need of God’s forgiveness and mercy. And by the way, God is planning on doing something special down there in Egypt, which reminds us that God can use even people’s sinful actions to set the table for His plan and purpose.

Now chapter 37 wraps up by telling us in verse 36 that in Egypt Joseph is sold to Potiphar, a military captain serving under the pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

Chapter 38 rather abruptly turns our attention away from Joseph and to his older brother Judah. God is going to show us a stark contrast between Joseph, who will resist sexual temptation, and Judah, who will not.

Now remember, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob all wanted their sons to marry Hebrew women who followed God. Judah marries a Canaanite woman, and we’re told in the opening verses of chapter 38 that she bears three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah. When Er grows up, Judah finds a wife for him, a woman named Tamar. Verse 7 tells us Er is “wicked in the sight of the LORD,” and the Lord takes his life in judgment.

During these ancient days, if a husband died before having children, his brother was to marry the widow and have a child by her who would serve as the deceased brother’s heir. This was Onan’s responsibility. But instead of honoring his brother’s name, whenever Onan had sexual relations with Tamar, the Bible says, Onan “would waste the semen on the ground, so as not to give offspring to his brother” (verse 9). In other words, he didn’t want to share any inheritance with anybody. We don’t know how long this went on, but it was a wicked way to treat his new wife, Tamar; and God put Onan to death because of it.

So, Judah tells Tamar in verse 11, “Remain a widow in your father’s house, till Shelah my son grows up.” But when Shelah is grown, Judah doesn’t keep his word. So now what?

Well, we’re told in verse 12 that Judah’s wife dies. It’s possible that Tamar was influenced by the Hittites living nearby, whose law stated that if the brothers of the deceased don’t perform this inheritance duty for the widow, then it’s the responsibility of the father-

*“This divided,  
deceitful, hateful  
family is the family  
chosen by God to  
give the world the  
nation Israel, and  
the coming  
Redeemer.”*





in-law. Well, let me say, no such law existed for the Hebrews, and what a mess this is about to make.

Tamar goes out to where Judah is shearing his sheep; she's dressed as a pagan temple prostitute. She catches the attention of Judah, who yields to the temptation, not recognizing her. But verse 17 informs us that he doesn't have any money to pay her. So, he hands her his signet ring and cord and his staff as a pledge that he'll pay her later. However, when he sends the payment later on, she's nowhere to be found.

Judah's signet ring officially sealed documents; it hung on a cord, which was typically custom-made. His staff would have been carved uniquely. It would've been one of a kind and identifiable as Judah's alone.

Tamar conceives by Judah, and verse 24 tells us that about three months later, she's discovered to be pregnant. Judah is outraged and demands that she be put to death. What a hypocrite, by the way. Isn't it interesting how we quickly condemn the sins of others and overlook our own? I can see that speck in your eye, but I can't see the telephone pole sticking out of my own eye.

Well, Tamar comes walking out of the house carrying Judah's staff, signet ring, and cord and says, "By the man to whom these belong, I am pregnant" (verse 25). Oh my!

Now to his credit, Judah humbly responds in verse 26, "She is more righteous than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah."

Six months later Tamar gives birth to twins. And get this: Judah, Tamar, and these twin boys are all listed by Matthew's Gospel in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:3)!

Can you imagine? The Messiah will descend from Judah through Tamar—two sinners who needed a Re-

deemer. The Messiah who died for their sins died for your sins and mine too, so that by faith in Him we too can be forgiven and become a part of the family of God. This is the marvelous story throughout history of the amazing grace of God.

---

How can you guard against developing attitudes of favoritism in your family?

Genesis 37 and 38 remind us that God is never absent even though His works are often unseen. How does this truth give a balanced perspective to your life?

---



Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## THE SUFFERING OF JOSEPH

Genesis 39

Bad things happen to godly people. However, we recognize that God is still at work in our lives even as we suffer. Like Joseph, we can't always see the end results when our lives are in turmoil, but we can trust that God is preparing us in some unique ways to serve Him.

Can you remember a time when your life was thrown into absolute chaos? It doesn't matter if it was unavoidable circumstances or other people that caused it, or if it was your own doing.

You probably found it a fearful time—maybe a lonely time. I wish God's children had some kind of promise that painful experiences won't last very long, but God hasn't promised that. What He *has* promised is His presence with us through those experiences.

Joseph's experiences in Genesis 39 are going to show us that suffering is not wasted in the design God has for our lives.

Verses 1-2 set the stage:

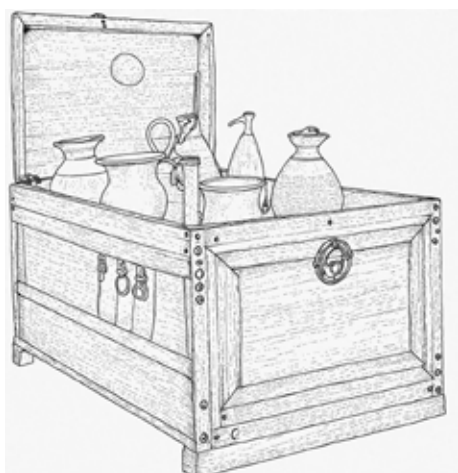
*Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man.*

Down in verse 4 we read this:

*Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and [Potiphar] made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.*

Then note verse 6:

*He left all that he had in Joseph's charge ... he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.*



Butler's toiletry chest from the tomb of Kha.



In other words, the only thing Potiphar had to make a decision about was whether he was going to eat shrimp for dinner or grilled chicken out on the patio.

Six different times in this opening paragraph we read that God was *with* Joseph. My friend, it would be easy for Joseph to think God had forgotten all about him. Satan is always ready to convince you that God doesn't care and He's probably not even aware of what you're going through.

Nothing could be further from the truth. God is aware of where you are right now.

*“Satan is always  
ready to convince  
you that God  
doesn't care...”*

In this narrative, there's somebody else who's been watching Joseph's every move—and unfortunately, it's Potiphar's wife.

We're given a description of Joseph in verse 6, which tells us “Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.” This could be paraphrased to read that Joseph was good-looking and well built, or muscular. Now there's nothing wrong with a guy being well built and good-looking—it's not fair, but it's not wrong. And let me tell you, Joseph was quite a catch.

The Bible tells us in verse 7 that Potiphar's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she came right out and said to him one day, “Lie with me.” But Joseph refused.

Later, down in verse 12, she says it again: “Lie with me.” Here it's actually an imperative verb, a command. In verse 7 it starts out as an invitation. But in verse 12, it's an ultimatum.

My friend, you might be under the impression that resisting temptation means it will go away. You know,

maybe if you don't answer the door, the knocking will stop. No, it won't. In fact, it just might try to kick down the door. That is what's happening to Joseph.

After repeated advances from this woman, Joseph continued to resist. He stood firmly on what he said when she first sought to entice him in verse 9:

*“[My master hasn't] kept back  
anything from me except your-  
self, because you are his*

wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

Now remember, Joseph has been sold into slavery in Egypt. His family's not around; he doesn't have to worry about his testimony or his reputation. So why not?

Plato used to tell a story to his students of a shepherd boy who discovered a ring out in the field. Whenever he slipped that ring on, it made him unrecognizable to anyone in his village. Prior to this discovery, he was a fine, upright young man, but he became a wicked man.

Joseph is virtually anonymous—he's unrecognizable. Nobody in Egypt knows him. If there's an easy time to sin, it's now. He's single, handsome, successful, and it looks like his God has abandoned him. No one will ever know.

But did you notice what he told her? He said, “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” He hasn't lost sight of the fact that even if no one in Egypt knows who he is, God knows. Even if this woman doesn't think it would be sinning against her, he knows he would be sinning against God.

I think it's interesting that when it comes to temptations of the flesh, the Bible tells you to flee—to run. Don't stand there and negotiate. Run for your life.

And that's what Joseph does here. I like the way the old King James translates verse 12: “And he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.” He got himself out of there! Joseph might have lost his cloak, but he's going to keep his character.



Now the problem is, Potiphar's wife is going to use Joseph's cloak as evidence that he tried to rape her. So, she starts screaming out for help, and when the men of the household come rushing in, she says to them:

*"He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice. And as soon as he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me and fled and got out of the house."* (verses 14-15)

She tells the same lie to Potiphar in verse 17. In fact, she places the blame on Potiphar. Notice: "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to laugh at me."

In other words, "It's all your fault!" I think if you looked behind closed doors at this marriage, you would find a lot of conflict and resentment. We're told that Potiphar became angry, but we're not told that his anger was toward *Joseph* (verse 19).

Keep in mind that Potiphar was captain of Pharaoh's guard, which meant he was the chief executioner. And if he really believed Joseph had tried to molest his wife, Joseph's head wouldn't have been attached to his body past suppertime.

The fact that Potiphar places Joseph in prison, sparing his life, makes me believe he knew all along that his wife was unfaithful and dishonest. But that doesn't help Joseph much, does it?

Beloved, resisting temptation won't mean your life will get easier; in fact, it might get harder. You might lose your job because you won't compromise your convictions. You might lose a relationship because you won't engage in sin. You might lose a contract because you won't promise something you can't produce.

But you're honoring God and trusting God with your future, even when He seems absent. I'm sure Joseph spent many nights in prison crying, "Lord, do you even know what I'm going through right now?"

But just look at verses 21-22:

*But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison.*

The Lord was with Joseph and gave him success. Success didn't mean that he got out of jail. No, he's still in jail, but God is at work.

God allowed Joseph the opportunity to learn how to manage Potiphar's household, and now He's going to let Joseph learn how to manage a prison. God is preparing Joseph to one day manage the nation of Egypt.

Joseph is suffering, but his suffering is not wasted. It's woven into God's plan for his life.

And so it is for all of us. How comforting it is to know that God is present and at work in our lives, even in the midst of our suffering.

---

What most occupies your thoughts when your life is in turmoil—your circumstances or the God who controls your circumstances? What changes might you need to make?

What biblical strategies do you have for combating temptation?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)







## FROM PRISONER TO PRIME MINISTER

Genesis 40–41

Our lives take unexpected turns. Yet no matter what we face, we can trust the Lord and make choices that honor Him, knowing that in His time, He will honor our faithfulness to Him. This is the lesson from Joseph's experiences in Genesis 40–41.

I've heard it said that 10 percent of life is what happens to you; 90 percent is how you respond to it. Genesis chapter 40 is going to show us three responses, or choices, Joseph makes that we need to make as well.

Chapter 40 takes us into the prison, where Joseph is introduced to Pharaoh's cupbearer and chief baker, two men who have just become prisoners themselves. We're not told what their offenses were, although one of them more than likely was involved in a plot to poison Pharaoh. But they've both been thrown into prison while an investigation takes place.

Verse 4 says, "The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them." By the way, "captain of the guard" is the title used earlier for Potiphar, so it may very well be Potiphar who is referred to here. If so, it indicates he knew all along that Joseph was innocent.

So, we're told that Joseph is "appointed" to take care of these high-ranking members of Pharaoh's court, and he cares for them despite his own hardships. Joseph's first response highlights an important principle for us: *Choosing to care about people, even when you feel uncared for, is a gracious response to others.*

Notice it says in verse 4 that Joseph specifically and



Paint in the tomb of Qenamun showing bakers mixing and kneading dough.

personally "attended" to these men. The Hebrew verb means he's caring for them. Joseph doesn't just care *about* them; he's literally caring *for* them. It's easy to say you care *about* somebody while you sit there in your recliner; but to care *for* somebody means you get out of your easy chair and go do something.

Now it isn't long before the baker and the cupbearer have dreams that bother them. When Joseph asks them why they are discouraged, they respond in verse 8:

*"We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And*



*Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me.”*

Joseph’s response reveals a second principle that is relevant to us: *Choosing to point others to God, even when your own path is difficult, is a great statement of faith.*

*Choosing to point others to God, even when your own path is difficult, is a great statement of faith.*

Here these men are, surrounded by the false gods of Egypt, and Joseph is introducing them to *Elohim*—his God—the great Sovereign God who is able to interpret the riddles of life. Interpretation belongs to Him! What a great statement of faith by Joseph, especially when none of *his* dreams seem to be coming true.

Now for the rest of chapter 40, Joseph interprets the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker. The cupbearer is going to get his job back in three days, but the baker isn’t going back to work; in fact, he won’t be needing any retirement either because he’s going to be executed. Evidently, the baker was the one involved in trying to poison Pharaoh.

And three days later, this is exactly what happens.

But before the cupbearer goes back to work, listen to this pitiful request from Joseph:

*“Please do me the kindness to mention me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this [place]. For I*

*was indeed stolen out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the [prison].”*

(verses 14–15)

There’s nothing wrong with Joseph asking for a fair hearing. But in verse 23 we’re told rather bluntly, “The chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.”

Joseph has every reason to grow bitter and angry from this point on. In fact, two years go by between the end of chapter 40 and the beginning of chapter 41. But instead of growing resentful, Joseph makes another important choice—to trust God’s timing for him. Here is a third great response we can state as a principle: *Choosing to trust God’s timing, even when you’re uncertain about the future, is a good way to deepen your walk with Him.*

How do we know Joseph’s faith deepened over those two years? Because later, in Genesis 45:4–8, he testifies that he knew God was still at work in his life.

Joseph waits for two long years. And then, unexpectedly, God’s plans for him turn a corner. You can almost see sunlight breaking into the prison cell of Joseph’s life.

Genesis 41 opens by recounting Pharaoh’s troubling dream:

*After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, and behold, there came up out of the Nile seven cows, attractive and plump, and they fed in the reed grass. And behold, seven other cows, ugly and thin, came up out of the Nile after them, and stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile.*



*And the ugly, thin cows ate up  
the seven attractive, plump cows.  
And Pharaoh awoke.* (verses 1–4)

Pharaoh's dream about the cows is followed immediately by another dream of seven good ears of grain that are swallowed up by seven thin ears of grain.

The king immediately calls for his wise men, but they just stand around in their pajamas—absolutely no help at all. Then in verse 9, the cupbearer remembers that young dream-interpreter back in prison, and within a matter of minutes, officials are getting Joseph out of his prison clothes—cleaned and shaved and probably given a haircut too—and bringing him into the court of Pharaoh (verse 14).

The conversation between Pharaoh and Joseph begins in verses 15 and 16:

*Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have  
heard it said of you that when  
you hear a dream you can inter-  
pret it. Joseph answered Pharaoh,  
“It is not in me; God will give  
Pharaoh a favorable answer.”*

Joseph then interprets these prophetic dreams as meaning seven years of bumper crops in Egypt are going to be followed by seven years of famine.

Joseph makes it very clear that God is behind these dreams. In verse 25, he says, “God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do.” In verse 28, he says, “God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do.” And in verse 32, Joseph says, “The thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about.”

“Pharaoh, you're not in charge of Egypt; you're not in control of life and success and bumper crops. My God is!” And what's more, Joseph tells Pharaoh he

needs to put somebody in charge of managing these bumper crops so that food is stored properly and then available during the seven years of famine.

Now Pharaoh is bright enough to know who that somebody should be, and he says to Joseph in verse 39, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house.”

A few hours earlier Joseph was sitting in prison; now he's the prime minister of Egypt—he's God's chosen leader ultimately to save the nation of Israel from starvation. He's the instrument that will keep God's covenant plan moving forward, so that one day, through this nation, the Messiah will be introduced to the world. From Potiphar's house, to the prison house, to Pharaoh's house, God was preparing Joseph all along the way.

I don't know what God's doing in your life right now, but I do know there are three godly choices you can make along the way:

- To care about people even when you feel uncared for—that's a gracious response.
- To point others to God even when your own path is difficult—that's a great statement of faith.
- To trust God's timing, even when you're uncertain about your future—that's a good way to deepen your walk with God.

---

Do your circumstances affect the  
way you respond to others?  
Should they?

What opportunities does your present  
situation, whether good or bad, give  
you to point others to God?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## BOWING BEFORE JOSEPH

Genesis 42:1-28

Sometimes our conscience needs to be prodded and refreshed so that we not only feel guilt but act upon it. Wisely, Joseph did not attack the brothers who had mistreated him but tested them so they would both acknowledge and repent of their sin.

In 1811 a fund was created by the U. S. Treasury Department called the “Conscience Fund.” It all started with \$5 sent in anonymously by someone who had cheated the government and wanted to pay it back. Over the past two hundred years, the Treasury Department has received more than \$6 million in repayments, with written confessions included. One man mailed in nine cents because he had reused a postage stamp; another sent in \$40,000 in several allotments to make up for what he had stolen in taxes over many years. Another individual wasn’t able to repay with money but sent in some handmade quilts as repayment. Many of these people were trying to silence the guilt they felt. Others were a little suspect, like one individual who wrote, “Dear Internal Revenue Service, I have not been able to sleep at night because I cheated on last year’s income tax. Enclosed find a cashier’s check for \$1,000. If I still can’t sleep, I’ll send you the balance.”<sup>1</sup>

What makes us lose sleep over sin? What is it inside us that so deeply troubles us?

No matter where you go in the world—Africa, Australia, Albania, America—everybody knows that stealing your neighbor’s chicken is wrong. That guilty feeling isn’t a social construct; it’s produced by a God-given creation called the conscience.

Your conscience encourages you when you’re right and gets on to you when you’re wrong. The problem is, your conscience can be trained like you train your dog to roll over and play dead. Our conscience must be trained, not by our society, but by the Scriptures.

But let me encourage you; if you’re bothered by

*If you’re bothered  
by something you’ve  
done, that’s actually  
a sign that your  
conscience is  
fulfilling its  
God-given function.  
It’s still operating,  
and it can  
be revived.*





something you've done, that's actually a sign that your conscience is fulfilling its God-given function. It's still operating, and it can be revived.

Now here in Genesis chapter 42, we're going to watch the revival of the conscience in Joseph's brothers. For twenty years they have tried to ignore their guilty consciences. And it hasn't worked for one moment—and that's good news.

Just as Joseph predicted, the famine in Egypt arrived, and it eventually reached into the land of Canaan, where Jacob and his family are living.

In chapter 42 we read:

*When Jacob learned that there was grain for sale in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" And he said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain for sale in Egypt. Go down and buy grain for us there, that we may live and not die."* (verses 1-2)

In other words, "Why are you standing around looking at each other? We're running out of food, and everybody knows you can get grain down in Egypt, so what are you waiting for?"

But Egypt is the last place these brothers want to go. Just the mention of Egypt stirs their guilty consciences.

There's an old proverb that says, "You never speak of rope in a hangman's house." Well, you never speak of Egypt around the sons of Jacob.

These boys have kept a secret, but now because of the famine, they've run out of options. So, verse 3 tells us that off to Egypt they go. I can't help but think that as they entered the Egyptian city and saw slaves performing menial tasks, were their hearts beating with fear that they would turn a corner and come face to face with their brother?

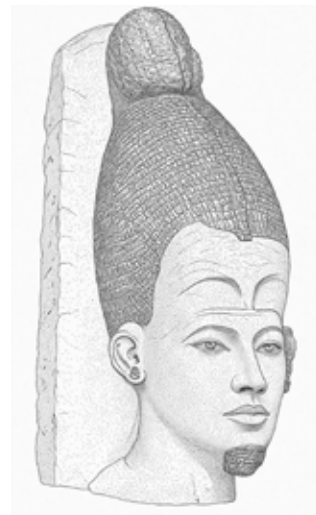
Now in verse 6 we're told that the brothers came before Joseph and "bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground." This sounds like that dream Joseph had as a young boy, doesn't it? According to verse 7, Joseph recognizes them.

But verse 8 tells us, "They did not recognize him." Well, Joseph is nearly forty years old now, wearing the rich garments and gold jewelry of the prime minister of Egypt. He would have been wearing the Egyptian headdress and been clean-shaven according to Egyptian custom, whereas his brothers, in Hebrew fashion, would have had full beards. They wouldn't have begun to imagine this powerful Egyptian ruler was their little brother.

Now what Joseph does next is really a test to see if they are the same cutthroat men who had wanted to kill him years earlier. In verse 9 Joseph accuses them of being spies. And they panic, insisting they're not spies. They explain in verse 13 their family situation, revealing that their father had twelve sons, but one is no more (that would be Joseph), and their youngest brother, Benjamin, is back home.

So, Joseph tests their character even further in verse 16 by demanding that one of them return to Canaan and bring Benjamin back to Egypt to prove what they've said about their family. Then in verse 17 he puts them all into prison for three days to think it over.

Keep in mind, as verse 23 tells us, that Joseph is speaking to them in Egyptian, through a Hebrew in-



Partial statue of the Pharaoh Senureset III



interpreter. They don't know he can understand everything they're saying to one another.

Now back in verse 18, Joseph lets them out of prison and says he's going to keep one brother in Egypt as insurance, while the rest of the brothers can take the grain they have purchased back home. But Joseph insists that they return to Egypt with their youngest brother; that will prove their innocence.

Now Joseph knows that his *old* brothers wouldn't have cared about abandoning one brother to save their own skin. After all, they had abandoned him and all these years had never come looking for him in Egypt.

Without knowing Joseph can understand them, the brothers wonder out loud about what is happening to them. They see only one reason God is permitting this:

*They said to one another, "In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us. And Reuben answered them, "Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy? But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood." (verses 21-22)*

Don't miss that: "We are guilty." In fact, in the Hebrew text, the word *we* is emphatic. "*We*—oh, we are

guilty. We did not listen to Joseph as he begged for his life."

With that, Joseph rushes out of the room, and the tears come pouring down his cheeks (verse 24). Are these tears of grief? Yes. But they're also tears of hope. He's just heard his brothers admit that they had known all along that what they did to him was heartless and wrong. They had lived with a guilty conscience all these years, and now they pour out to each other how sinful and selfish their lives have been.

When Joseph gains control—probably splashing water on his face—he returns and orders Simeon to be bound and placed in jail until his brothers return.

But he has another test in mind. In verse 25, Joseph has his brothers' grain bags filled up and each man's money placed in his sack as well. He's going to test their loyalty and honesty. Joseph is giving them every reason in the world to never come back to Egypt. They have plenty of grain and plenty of money as well. What's losing one more brother going to matter?

Was their apparent repentance for real? Would they care about their brother Simeon, who now waits for them in jail? Will they return to Egypt? We'll find out as our Wisdom Journey through God's Word continues.

---

What was the purpose of Joseph's speaking "roughly" with his brothers (Genesis 42:7)? What lessons can you learn from the way Joseph dealt with them?

How do people deal with a guilty conscience? How do *you* deal with a guilty conscience, and how *should* you do so?

---

<sup>1</sup> See "Conscience Fund," Wikipedia.org.





## THE BROTHERS' REUNION

Genesis 42:29–45:5

Neither Jacob nor his sons could have anticipated what God had in store for them as they encountered multiple hardships—famine, loss, accusations, and threats. God's greatest work in us, however, often takes place in our times of greatest distress.

In our last Wisdom Journey, we saw that Joseph's brothers have come to Egypt to buy grain during the famine and they don't recognize Egypt's prime minister. But Joseph recognizes them and immediately begins testing them. He's probing to discern their attitude toward their father, Jacob, and their own conscience in selling him into slavery some twenty years earlier.

When Joseph accuses them of being spies, they respond in Genesis 42:13:

*"We . . . are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan, and behold, the young-*

*est is this day with our father, and one is no more."*

Joseph is probably thinking, *Is that so?*

After holding them for a few days, Joseph allows nine of his brothers to return home with instructions to return to Egypt with their little brother, Benjamin.

Then in verse 27 they discover that the money they used to buy grain is in their bags of grain. They panic! Now what do they do? They look at each other and cry out in terror, "What is this that God has done to us?" (verse 28).

Simeon is being held hostage until they return to Egypt. Benjamin has to be brought back to Egypt, or Simeon will essentially rot in jail. And now it looks like they have stolen the grain. All their lives are now in danger.

When the brothers tell their father what happened, Jacob lashes out at them:

*"You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you*



The Tell ed-Dab'a region of Egypt



*would take Benjamin. All this has come against me.”* (verse 36).

“All these things are against me!” Jacob has shown glimpses of faith, but here he’s become a faithless man again. The circumstances outweigh his confidence that God is in control.

I think we’re all a lot like Jacob. One of the most repeated mistakes we make is interpreting the troubling events of our lives as meaning that God doesn’t care—that life is a dead end, and we’re all alone.

Jacob isn’t at a dead end; he’s in a cul-de-sac. God is using all these circumstances to turn his life around like he couldn’t imagine!

*“One of the most repeated mistakes we make is interpreting the troubling events of our lives as meaning that God doesn’t care...”*

God already promised to bless Jacob, provide for him, give him children, and multiply his family into a great nation, a nation from whom the Savior of the world would come. Those are some pretty big promises.

And God has made some pretty big promises to you. God says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). And He promises to exalt you if you humble yourself, “casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Now as we move into chapter 43 of Genesis, the famine is growing worse, and the grain these boys got down in Egypt is running out. Jacob insists that his sons go back to Egypt and buy more grain. But Judah reminds Jacob

that they can’t go back without Benjamin, or Simeon will die in that Egyptian prison.

Jacob then musters up what I believe to be an amazing statement of faith:

*“Take . . . your brother, and arise, go again to the man. May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”* (verses 13-14)

It’s in the hands of “God Almighty.” Here the name for God Jacob uses is *El Shaddai*. He is the Great Provider. Jacob is backed into a corner, yet he makes up his mind to trust in *El Shaddai*, essentially saying, “Only our Great God can get us out of this mess.”

Now when Jacob’s sons arrive back in Egypt, they are immediately taken to Joseph’s house by Joseph’s steward, who evidently knows the Hebrew language. The brothers explain to him they had no idea how their money ended up back in their sacks of grain.

He tells them not to be afraid and gives them water to wash up from their long journey because they’re going to eat dinner that night in the home of the prime minister. I can’t imagine what they must have been thinking now. Their heads must have been spinning.

Joseph comes home, and his brothers bow down before him. But when he sees his younger brother, Benjamin, Joseph is overwhelmed. This is his blood brother, the only other son from his mother Rachel. And all Joseph can get out of his mouth—and it seems he speaks to Benjamin in Hebrew in verse 29—is, “God be gracious to you, my son!”

And with that Joseph rushes out of the room to weep. Why weep? I would assume he was overwhelmed with over twenty years of loss. He hadn’t chosen Egypt. He had stayed there because somewhere between the prison cell and the office of prime minister, God had made





it very clear, “Joseph, I brought you here. This is My will for your life to save your family—and the future nation of Israel—from starvation.” This is a good reminder that the will of God often includes difficulty and pain and tears.

Chapter 44 opens with the brothers preparing to return home with more grain. But Joseph has one more test up his sleeve: he wants to know if they will abandon Benjamin like they had abandoned him. So, he has his special silver cup secretly placed in Benjamin’s sack of grain.

In verse 6 the servant catches up with the brothers and accuses them of stealing the cup. They deny the charge and even insist that the thief should be put to death. To their horror, verse 12 says, “And the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack.”

But instead of leaving Benjamin behind and running for their own lives, the brothers all return to Joseph. And Judah makes a plea for mercy that reveals their hearts have been changed over these many years:

*“What shall we say to my lord?  
What shall we speak? Or how  
can we clear ourselves? God has  
found out the guilt of your ser-  
vants.”* (verse 16)

He goes on to remind Joseph in verse 20:

*“We have a father, an old man,  
and a young brother, the child of  
his old age. His brother is dead,  
and he alone is left of his moth-  
er’s children, and his father loves  
him.”*

There’s no jealousy now over their younger brother. Judah pleads with Joseph in verse 33: “Please let [me]

remain instead of the boy, as [your slave], and let the boy go back with his brothers.”

With this final proof of their loyalty and repentance, Joseph starts crying so loudly his weeping is heard all through the palace. And then he stuns his brothers, telling them in Genesis 45:3, “I am Joseph!”

They’re speechless, but Joseph goes on to say to his brothers:

*“Do not be distressed or angry  
with yourselves because you sold  
me here, for God sent me before  
you to preserve life. . . . God  
sent me . . . to preserve for you a  
remnant on earth . . . it was not  
you who sent me here, but God.”*

(verses 5, 7-8)

What do you know? All these things weren’t against Jacob; they were *for* Jacob and his family. It just took twenty years to find out.

I wonder, What’s God doing in your life? You may not know yet. There may be unanswered questions and unexplainable trials. But He is *El Shaddai* –God Almighty. He has plans for you; He’s made promises to you; He has a future for you.

Perhaps your greatest statement of faith right now is that you believe that—and you are trusting the Lord.

---

Do you ever measure God’s love and care for you by your circumstances? What biblical truths counter this kind of thinking?

What elements of genuine love do you see in Judah’s actions? How does this challenge you?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## TOGETHER AT LAST

Genesis 45:1–47:12

The joyful reunion of Joseph with both his brothers and his father reminds us of the power of confession and forgiveness. It also reminds us that in His providence God often effects changes in people over many years and through many heartaches.

I remember reading the account of a soldier who had been a prisoner of war for seven years. When the war ended, he returned home. He had become a Christian during his captivity and would later write how the Lord enabled him to handle the years of suf-

fering and isolation and separation from his wife and children.

Thousands of people gathered at the airport to witness this wonderful family reunion. He didn't know it, but one of his daughters was now married and he was a grandfather. He also didn't know that his son had been in an accident and was there to greet him from his wheelchair. It was a tender moment when this father knelt beside his son's wheelchair and embraced him, and they wept together.

There is something very moving, very touching, about a family reunion. In fact, there's something in our hearts that yearns to go home.

Years ago, when I was preaching at a missionary conference near my hometown, I decided to travel over to my childhood home where I, along with my three brothers, had been raised by our missionary parents. So, I drove over to Red Brook Road, in Norfolk, Virginia.

Everything looked different, of course. The tree I used to climb was gone. The front yard had green grass—something we never had because we constantly wore it out playing and running. I went up and knocked on the door, and a young mother answered and then invited me in so that I could walk



A false god, probably Nergal, carrying lion-headed scepters



through that little house. Each room brought back so many memories.

Eventually, I made my way to that little bedroom where I had knelt as a teenager, giving my sin and my heart and my life to Christ. It was so good to be reminded of the grace of God.

For more than twenty years, Joseph has been away from home. It wasn't his choice—he had been sold into slavery by his brothers. He had been robbed of his youth, and his heart longed for home, to see his father, Jacob, again and to reunite with his entire family.

Now we're in Genesis 45, where Joseph finally reveals to his eleven brothers who he is. He announces to them in verse 4, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt."

And let me tell you, nobody would blame Joseph if his next words were, "And you're all going to pay dearly for what you did to me." But revenge is the response of the flesh, not the Spirit.

His next words are, "Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life" (verse 5). And then in verse 7: "God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth." "It was not you who sent me here," he says in verse 8, "but God."

*"But revenge is the response of the flesh, not the Spirit."*

This was God's plan all along. And in a tender moment—in fact, in one of the most miraculous moments in this twenty-year drama—verse 15 says, "And [Joseph] kissed all his brothers [note, *all* his brothers] and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him." I can't imagine all the apologies and tears and the forgiveness and the family updates and the memories they shared together.

Joseph tells his brothers to go home immediately

and inform Jacob of all that's happened and tell him to come to Joseph in Egypt; and they do just that. Imagine the scene here in verse 26: "And they told [Jacob], 'Joseph is still alive, and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.'"

And Jacob responds exactly as you and I would have. The Bible says, "His heart became numb, for he did not believe them."

This is too good to be true. Joseph is alive! He wasn't killed by a wild animal decades earlier. And he's the ruler of the land of Egypt!

Now at this point, these brothers are going to have to confess to their father the great sin they had committed, the worst secret they had ever kept. Verse 27 tells us they told Jacob everything Joseph had said to them. This would have included Joseph's perspective that although his brothers had sold him into slavery, God had sent him there; God had used their sin ultimately to provide for His chosen nation.

And here in verse 27, we read, "The spirit of their father Jacob revived." In other words, Jacob was filled with hope again. Verse 28: "And Israel said." I love that: "Israel said." This is Jacob's covenant name, which implies that his confidence in God's covenant promises is restored. "And Israel said, 'It is enough; Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.'"

In chapter 46, Jacob travels to Beersheba, which is at the southernmost tip of the promised land. Jacob stops here and offers sacrifices, declaring his allegiance to God. And God comes to Jacob in a night vision and speaks to him:

*"Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again."*

(verses 3-4)

Now when Jacob and his family arrive, verse 29 says:



*Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to meet Israel his father in Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.*

What a moment. What a family reunion. After all these years, the family is finally together again.

Jacob says in verse 30, “Now let me die, since I have seen your face.” In other words, “I can die now in peace. I now know the answer to the questions I asked God a thousand times: ‘What happened to Joseph, and why?’”

Beloved, many of you are probably waiting for answers to questions like these. In time, the Lord may give you answers in this life, but you may not be given answers until the moment you see the Lord face to face—and He will be answer enough.

In the next chapter, Genesis 47, Pharaoh invites all of them not only to live in the region of Goshen and tend their own flocks and herds, but also to watch over his livestock as well.

Egyptians didn’t like shepherds, which they considered an occupation for the poorest of the poor. So, the land of Goshen will provide not only pastureland and security but also a measure of protection away from much of the idolatry of Egypt as this family of seventy grows into a nation of several million people.

By the way, Joseph becomes a wonderful illustration of Jesus Christ. Back in chapter 45, when Joseph sent his brothers back home to Jacob and the rest of his family, he essentially sent them with a threefold message: “First, tell them that I’m not dead; I’m alive.

Secondly, tell them that I am now exalted as lord over all of Egypt. And thirdly, invite them all to come and live with me.”

Do you see it? We’re telling our world that Jesus Christ isn’t dead; He’s alive! We’re telling our world that Jesus is exalted in glorious splendor as Lord of Lords and King of Kings; and we’re giving the world His personal invitation to come and live with Him in heaven.

Have you accepted His invitation? You can by praying right now, “Lord Jesus, I believe You died for sinners like me. I accept Your invitation to trust You alone for my salvation. Forgive my sin, Lord, accept me into Your family, and become my Lord and Savior.”

---

To what do you attribute Joseph’s forgiving attitude toward his brothers? What lesson does this have for you?

In what ways have you changed over the years? How should this knowledge affect the way you deal with other people?

---



Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)







## THE WISE LEADERSHIP OF JOSEPH

Genesis 47:13–48:22

Joseph was mistreated, imprisoned, and forgotten, yet he remained faithful to God, and in the end, God honored him and used him greatly. His life illustrates that our role is to remain always faithful to God and allow Him to work in and through us according to His timing.

At this point in our journey through the book of Genesis, we are given some insight into the wise leadership of Joseph during these days of famine. In chapter 47 verse 13 we read:

*There was no food in all the land, for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished by reason of the famine.*

Remember, under Joseph's direction, grain from seven bumper-crop years had been stored in massive granaries for this seven-year famine.

Now the people are buying grain from the government of Egypt. Then we're told that at some point, the people ran out of money, so they traded their livestock for grain. Now what's left?

Verses 18-19 tell us:

*[The people] said to [Joseph] . . . "There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our land . . . Buy us and*

*our land for food, and we with our land will be servants to Pharaoh. And give us seed that we may live and not die."*

Joseph now demonstrates compassion. He's loyal to Pharaoh, but he's not going to take advantage of the people. So, he creates a generous system for them as they farm the land. In verse 24 he says to them:

*"At the harvests you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four fifths*



A painting in the tomb of Sennedjem shows embalming



*shall be your own, as seed for the field and as food for yourselves and your households, and as food for your little ones.”*

Old Testament scholars believe this was a tax plan set up for the benefit of both Pharaoh and the people. Everyone essentially wins. In fact, verse 26 tells us that this system remained in force till the time of Moses, four hundred years later. I can't imagine a tax plan working so well that you keep it running four hundred years. We change our tax plans every other year.

Now keep in mind that this is also the perfect opportunity for Joseph to pad his own pockets—to follow the pattern of power that so many leaders have taken throughout history. But notice: Joseph's plan gives the people seed and food for their families, and I love how he adds in verse 24, “and . . . for your little ones.”

No wonder the Egyptians loved and respected Joseph. Verse 25 tells us they said to him, “You have saved our lives; may it please my lord, we will be servants to Pharaoh.” In other words, “We're going to be loyal Egyptian citizens out of sheer gratitude for your kindness and care for us.”

Now this wonderful truth is captured here in verse 27:

*Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly.*

This confirms that God is keeping His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob is living in Egypt with his family, and just as God promised, his family is multiplying. When they leave Egypt some four hundred years later, this family of seventy will have become a nation of several million people.

If I could put this text into the form of a principle, it would be this: *God's promises have their own perfect timing.*

If you're worried today that God has forgotten to keep His promises to you, or somehow missed the deadline, He hasn't. His timing is absolutely perfect.

Verse 28 says, “And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the days of Jacob, the years of his life, were 147 years.” Not only has Jacob lived a long time, but this is the author's way of alerting us to the fact that the age of the patriarchs—the era of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—is coming to a close.

Jacob calls Joseph to his bedside and says to him in verse 29, “Do not bury me in Egypt.” He wants to be buried in the land of Canaan, the land God promised to his descendants, the nation Israel. This is more than Jacob just wanting a nice cemetery plot under a big oak tree. This is Jacob's statement of faith: “Bury me in the land of promise. That's where I belong.”

Joseph agrees. But then Jacob here makes Joseph take an oath that he'll keep his promise. I think that's because Joseph's been in Egypt all these years and Jacob's probably wondering if some of Egypt has worn off on Joseph. But it hasn't at all. Joseph will keep his word.

Now Genesis 48 focuses entirely on the *future* of the nation of Israel, and the narrative highlights the two sons of Joseph who were born in Egypt. Manasseh is the oldest, and Ephraim the youngest. More than likely, they're both in their twenties at this point.

Joseph gets word that his father is dying, so he goes to his bedside with his two sons. Jacob, again called Israel here, speaks to Joseph and begins to recount the promises God made to him many years before.

Then in verse 5 he asks about his two grandsons and says to Joseph:

*“And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are.”*

With these words, Jacob is adopting these grandsons and making them equal to his own sons.



Joseph realizes his father is about to give a blessing to these two young men. So, he positions his oldest son, Manasseh, at Jacob's right hand, which symbolizes the place of prominence; and Ephraim, his second-born, is placed at Jacob's left hand (verse 13). But as Jacob begins to give his blessing, he suddenly crosses his hands, switching the greater blessing to the younger son.

*When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, "Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know." (verses 17-19)*

This was God's direction to the old patriarch Jacob, who, you remember, was himself the second-born son who received the firstborn blessing. This was God's plan.

Let me put it this way: *God's plan often reverses our plans.*

Sometimes God turns everything upside down in order to make everything right side up. Maybe you have some plan, some dream that's been fading away, unfulfilled. Maybe God is keeping some door closed, or someone else received the blessing you wanted to have.

I remember applying to a church to become their pastor after my seminary studies were finished. This little church was interested. Everything was the right fit. My wife and I visited several times, and I preached and met

*"Sometimes God turns everything upside down in order to make everything right side up."*

with the leadership. My wife had recently delivered our twin boys, and we were ready to settle in and begin our new ministry. But then a week after graduation, the church sent me their decision; they weren't interested after all. Frankly, we didn't know what to do.

A few months later God moved our hearts in an entirely different direction, and we ended up planting from scratch a church where we have served for nearly 40 years.

I like to say that when God closes a door, He opens a window. We climbed through that window and learned what Joseph learned here: God's thoughts and plans aren't necessarily our thoughts and plans.

Sometimes doors remain shut, and God opens a window to something entirely different.

What qualities of godly leadership do you see in Joseph's life? What principles can you draw from him to guide your own life?

What marks of a mature faith do you find in Jacob at this point in his life? How does this encourage and motivate you?

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)





## SCENES OF FAITH AND FORGIVENESS

Genesis 49–50

The last two chapters of Genesis remind us that God is always at work, providentially advancing His eternal plan. They also remind us that His plan involves His work in individual lives and experiences to promote love, forgiveness, faith, and faithfulness.

Today we finish our Wisdom Journey through the book of Genesis, or the book of “Beginnings,” which is what “Genesis” means.

We’ve studied the only eyewitness account of Creation,

as God revealed it to us through Moses. We’ve watched as the first couple, Adam and Eve, walked right into sin, and we’ve watched the results of sin spread through our fallen human race.

But Genesis is also a book of promises. It presents the promise of a coming Redeemer, which has since come true in Jesus Christ. It offers promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the nation Israel—promises of a land, a throne, and a kingdom—which will all be fulfilled when we reach the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation.

Now for today, the last scene of Jacob’s life shows us a man of deep faith, so different from his earlier years of self-centeredness and deception. In these closing chapters, we’ve watched Jacob speak words of blessing to Pharaoh in chapter 47 and words of promise and blessing to Joseph and his two sons in chapter 48. Now in chapter 49, he gathers his twelve sons to his side to bless each of them.

Verse 28 sets the stage for us as we’re told that Jacob “blessed them . . . each with the blessing suitable to him.” In other words, these blessings are prophetic. In fact, verse 1 states that these blessings are all about “what shall happen . . . in [the] days to come.”

Jacob begins with his oldest son, Reuben in verses



Papyrus Anastasi VI





3-4. He says that while Reuben is preeminent in dignity and power, he is “unstable as water” emotionally. Because of the sin described in Genesis 35:22, his tribe will not be preeminent in Israel.

Next, Jacob blesses Simeon and Levi together in verses 5-7. He recalls their murderous revenge in Shechem years earlier and now delivers the lasting consequences of their sin, which will include being scattered abroad.

Beloved, this is a good reminder that while your sins and mine are forgiven through the blood of Christ, consequences might still remain. The effects of drugs on someone’s mental capabilities aren’t miraculously removed when a person becomes a Christian; a prison sentence isn’t eliminated just because you get saved; a marriage or a ministry that’s lost because of infidelity isn’t automatically restored.

Beloved, sin can be forgiven, but consequences can linger. And God wants you to accept that fact. Don’t resent God, and don’t resist what God’s plans are for you now as you trust Him and walk with Him. It might look different now, but God has a future for you as you walk with Him.

You can’t change yesterday, but God can change you, and He has a purpose for you even now. Like the apostle Paul, who had a terrible past of persecuting Christians, you can say, “Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

*“You can’t change  
yesterday, but God  
can change you...”*

Now Jacob’s fourth son, Judah, is described as a powerful lion who will become a leader among the tribes of Israel. Verse 10 says the scepter and the rul-

er’s staff will remain in Judah “until tribute comes to him.” This word “tribute” here is literally “Shiloh” and probably refers to the Messiah. So, Judah will become the royal tribe in Israel from which David will come and eventually the Messiah-King.

Zebulun and Issachar are mentioned briefly with few details in Jacob’s blessing. His son Dan is described as a “judge” in verse 16, and the judge Samson will become a prominent figure from the tribe of Dan.

Jacob’s blessings on Gad, Asher, and Naphtali are brief and predict future conflicts and even productivity on their farms.

The blessings for Joseph’s descendants, who will become the half-tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, are described in verses 22-26. Like Joseph himself, they will prosper but also come under attack. In the end, however, they’re going to stand firm by the help of Almighty God.

Finally, the youngest, Benjamin, is described as a wolf. This probably speaks of his descendants’ warlike character. Judges 20:16 tells us some Benjaminites were known for their military skill as archers and slingers.

In Genesis 49:29-30, Jacob charges his sons to bury him in the cave of Machpelah; this is where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah are all buried. This is a declaration of Jacob’s faith, because for the last seventeen years of his life, he has lived in Egypt. But he considers Canaan, the land of promise, his real home. Following the command concerning his burial, Jacob dies.

As we arrive in the last chapter of Genesis, chapter 50, two events get most of the attention. The first is the burial of Jacob. In verse 2 we read that Joseph orders the embalming of his father’s body. This way, Joseph is able to preserve Jacob’s body for the long trip back to Canaan.

The second event refocuses on Joseph and his brothers. After Jacob dies, Joseph’s older brothers are afraid Joseph might seek revenge after all. So, in verse 16, they send a message to Joseph, asking all over again for forgiveness.



Listen, thirty-nine years after they sold Joseph into slavery, they still can't believe Joseph has really forgiven them. I mean, you just don't forgive this kind of thing!

Is Joseph going to call for the royal executioner to lop off their heads now that Jacob has died? No, he tells them in verse 19 they have nothing to fear. And then he makes this incredible statement to them:

*“You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear.”* (verses 20-21)

Wow! How do you respond like this? Remember, Joseph had suffered through years of unfair treatment and unjust punishment. His life had been permanently changed. He's going to live in Egypt until he dies.

Responding like Joseph means understanding the principle of divine appointment. Joseph recognized that all he experienced was ultimately God's plan. God was in control, even of the evil that impacted his life.

Joseph never could have predicted exactly how the Lord would work it all out, but he was confident God would. And now, after nearly forty years—a lifetime—he demonstrates grace to his brothers and forgives them.

Beloved, have you forgotten that where you are in life is not the result of human accidents, but of divine appointments? Listen to Joseph tell his brothers that everything that happens in life, the good and the bad, is on God's appointment calendar. And keep in mind that Joseph had to wait forty years before it all made sense.

Several decades later, before Joseph dies at the age of 110, he makes the nation of Israel promise to take his body with them when they leave the land of Egypt. And some 400 years later, the great exodus takes place, and Moses keeps that promise, carrying Joseph's bones with him as Jacob's descendants leave the land of Egypt for good (Exodus 13:19).

The Book of Beginnings now comes to an end. This book, which began with the creation of life, ends with the death of Joseph, as if to highlight what sin brought into a world God had created in perfection.

But Genesis also ends with the assurance that whatever God promises, He fulfills; that no matter what happens to you in this fallen world of sin, God will carry you through, all the way to the promised land of heaven. And in the meantime, wherever you are right now is by the divine appointment of God.

---

Past sins may still affect you, but how can you make sure they don't control you?

Do your circumstances determine your view of God, or does God determine your view of circumstances? How can you more consistently live out a biblical perspective on life?

---

Help someone start their own Wisdom Journey:  
[www.wisdomonline.org](http://www.wisdomonline.org)

