

IN THE BEGINNING
A STUDY IN
GENESIS

VOLUME 3

MARK DRISCOLL

IN THE BEGINNING

A Study in Genesis

Volume 3: Genesis 27-36

REALFAITH.COM

By Mark Driscoll

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REAL GROUPS

WITH REALFAITH

Faith that does not result in good deeds is not real faith.

James 2:20, TLB

At RealFaith, we believe that the Word of God isn't just for us to read, it's to be obeyed. And living in community with fellow believers is one of the ways God the Father allows us to learn and grow to become more like His Son Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. We do this through something called Real Groups. Here are a few tips to start your own.

1. Invite

Invite your friends, neighbors, family, coworkers, and enemies, because they all need Jesus whether they know Him or not! Whether it's a group of men, women, families, students, or singles, explain that you'd like to start a weekly sermon-based small group based on Pastor Mark Driscoll's sermons.

2. Listen to the sermon on realfaith.com or on the RealFaith app

You can host a viewing party to watch **RealFaith Live** and discuss it all at once, or you can watch it separately and gather to discuss it at another time that works for the group.

3. Get into God's Word

In addition to watching the sermon, make sure you and all group members have a study guide from realfaith.com for the current sermon series. There are questions for personal reflection as well

as for groups that can guide your devotional times throughout the week. You can also sign up for Daily Devos at **realfaith.com**.

4. Gather together

Whether at someone's house, a public place, or through something like Zoom, meet weekly to discuss the sermon and what God has taught you through it. The great thing about Real Groups is that you don't all have to be in the same location. You can talk about sermon takeaways, what stood out to you in the study guide, or what God taught you in His Word that week. Focus on personal application as much as possible.

5. Pray

When you gather, feel free to share prayer requests, pray for each other on the spot, and continue praying throughout the week. Prayer is a great unifying force that God gives us to strengthen His family.

6. Share

Send us photos, videos, testimonies, and updates of how your group is doing to **hello@realfaith.com**. You might even be featured on our RealFaith Live show!

There are plenty more resources to discover at **realfaith.com/real-groups**, as well. We will be praying for you and your group and look forward to hearing what God does through it.

PREFACE

As we've been studying Genesis, I hope you are seeing the honest and raw humanity of the people God loves and saves. The central figures in Genesis read nothing like modern-day superheroes. They do not have superpowers and often seem as human, vulnerable, and frail as we often feel.

Adam let Satan take over his family while Eve thought she was helping but was not. The first brothers don't even get to grow old together as Cain kills Abel. Noah spends 120 years building a boat to save his family, only to get drunk and pass out naked in his tent once the waters subside. Abraham gives his wife Sarah away – twice. Their son Isaac will later repeat this family failure. Sarah devises a plan for Abraham to get a second wife, which leads to a son who becomes the father of the Arab nations, and these people are often not fans of the Son of God born through Abraham's other son, Isaac. Lot moves his family next door to Sodom only to see his family taken as prisoners of war. After being liberated by Abraham and a military collective from multiple kingdoms, he moves his family fully into Sodom where they barely escape alive as flaming road tar is sent from God to destroy the evil. His wife turns back, longing for her old life, and turns into a pillar of salt.

The people in Genesis are really just people. They have the same faults, flaws, and failures as you and I do. What makes each person special is not who they are, but who their God is. Over and over, God keeps pursuing wayward wanderers, keeps forgiving sins and foibles, keeps cleaning up messes people have made, and working for a better future for their families. Genesis opened by saying, "In the beginning, God". The theme, hero, and center of Genesis, the rest of Scripture, our lives, and all of human history

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is God. The good news we learn over and over in Genesis is that this God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is faithful even when we are faithless. Jesus Christ, who comes from this crazy family, is always for you and always there for you.

CHAPTER I

Learn About Genesis from the New Testament and Jesus Christ

In the earliest days of movie theaters, the films were often long and had an intermission in the middle. For example, if you watched *Gone With the Wind*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Ben-Hur*, or *Gandhi* in the theater, you would watch the first half of the film, take a break, and then return for the second half of the film.

The Bible is a bit like an old movie. The first half of the story is called the Old Testament. The intermission is called the intertestamental period. The last half of the story is called the New Testament.

Just like missing half a movie, if all you read or know is the Old or New Testament but not both, you would be missing a lot of the plot and have a hard time making sense of the storyline. Likewise, to fully understand Genesis, you need to connect it to the New Testament. To help you see the correlation of Genesis and the New Testament, we will connect Adam with Jesus, Cain and Abel with Jesus, Noah with Jesus, Sodom and Gomorrah with Jesus, Moses and Abraham with Paul, and Creation with the New Creation.

Adam and Jesus

In the New Testament, the first man Adam figures very heavily in Paul's teaching about Jesus Christ. Paul goes so far as to portray all of mankind as simply being either under Adam or under Jesus.^a

^a Romans 5:12-21; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Adam is our original covenant head^a whose sin and death implicates us as his descendants who would have likewise sinned had we been in his position. Therefore, we are each conceived with a sinful nature^b and separated from God because of our own sin by virtue of being grouped with Adam. Thankfully, Jesus has redeemed all that Adam had lost through His perfectly sinless faithfulness and death in our place as a substitute for our sins as our Savior. Through faith in Jesus, we move from being under the condemnation of Adam into the salvation of Jesus, who is the second Adam.^c Simply stated, everyone is either grouped with Adam in sin or grouped with Jesus, the sinner's Savior.

The parallels between Adam and Jesus are also interesting to note:

1. Adam turned from the Father in a garden; Jesus turned to the Father in a garden.
2. Adam was naked and unashamed; Jesus was nearly naked and bore our shame.
3. Adam's sin brought us thorns; Jesus wore a crown of thorns.
4. Adam substituted himself for God; Jesus was God substituting Himself for us.
5. Adam sinned at a tree; Jesus bore our sin on a tree.
6. Adam died as a sinner; Jesus died for sinners.

Cain, Abel and Jesus

In Genesis 4, Cain, the ungodly brother, murders his innocent and godly brother, Abel. The story of Cain and Abel points to Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:22-24 says, "you have come to...Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." Here are some of the parallels between Cain and Abel and Jesus:

1. Adam and Eve were kicked out of Eden into the wilderness.
Jesus left Eden to enter the wilderness.

^a Hosea 6:7 ^b Psalm 51:5, 58:4 ^c 1 Corinthians 15:20

2. God came as our big Brother Jesus Christ.
Jesus was innocent like Abel, and we killed Him like Cain.
3. Cain was the firstborn in all creation.
Jesus is the firstborn over all creation.
4. Cain and Abel were sons of Adam.
Jesus is the Son of God.
5. Cain and Abel were in God's presence.
God put His presence in us.
6. Cain was the unrighteous brother of the righteous Abel.
We are the unrighteous brother of the righteous Jesus.
7. Cain and Abel gave their sacrifice to God.
Jesus is God sacrificing Himself for us.
8. Cain killed the innocent Abel.
We killed the innocent Jesus.
9. Abel's death was the first human death.
Jesus' resurrection was the first human defeat of death.
10. Abel's blood cried out from the ground for justice.
Jesus rose from the bloody ground to bring justice.
11. Sin conquered Cain.
Jesus conquered sin.
12. Cain was marked by God as His possession.
The Holy Spirit marks us as God's possession.
13. In the days of Cain, people started calling on the name of the Lord.
Today, we know that Jesus Christ is the name of the Lord.
14. Cain built the first city named Enoch.
Jesus' is building the last named the New Jerusalem.

Noah and Jesus

In Genesis 7-8, the judgment of the world through the flood is reported in the days of Noah. The entire story of people rejecting the invitation to salvation for 120 years, living in constant sin and rebellion without remorse, and God shockingly and suddenly bringing death and judgment to all sinners is a story that points to the end of the world when Jesus will judge the world with fire

instead of water. Jesus says in Matthew 24:37-39, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying...up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”

Echoing Jesus, Peter says that the Flood was a warning of greater judgment coming through fire with Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:3-7 says, “...scoffers will come in the last days...following their own sinful desires. They will say, ‘Where is the promise of his coming?... all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.’ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.”

Lot and Jesus

In Genesis 18-19, the report of the believing Lot moving his family into Sodom is given. Jesus and two angels show up to rescue Lot and his family, and the men in the city (along with their sons) seek to sexually assault Jesus and the angels in one of the most shocking stories in all of Scripture. The story of Lot being rescued by God from the total destruction of Sodom, and surrounding towns like Gomorrah, are a warning and foreshadowing of the judgments of hell overseen by Jesus for all unrepentant sinners in the end. Jesus says in Luke 17:28-30, “just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.” 2 Peter 2:6-9 also says, “...by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he

condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment...”

Moses, Abraham, and Paul

While Moses is the towering author in the Old Testament, Paul is the towering author in the New Testament. He gives us at least 13 of the 27 New Testament books (he may have also written Hebrews), is the focus of much of the ministry in Acts 13-28, and is a pastor to Luke, who writes Luke and Acts. Paul is widely considered one of the most important thinkers and leaders in world history, and the one largely responsible for bringing Gentiles into relationship with the God of Abraham. Growing up, Paul meticulously studied the book of Genesis and possibly memorized the entire book in the original Hebrew in his later academic training. The correlations between the lives of Abraham and Paul are simply stunning.

First, in Genesis we see that the formation of the Gentile nations precedes the calling of Abraham so that the people who are to be reached for God precede God’s missionary Abraham.

Second, God called Abraham to bless the Gentile nations of the earth by bringing them the knowledge of God as a missionary. Likewise, God called Paul to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentile nations in accordance with Jesus’ restatement of the call of Abraham^a in the Great Commission.^b Likewise, in Paul’s day, the Gentile nations preceded him as their “Abraham” and spiritual father who brought them faith in Jesus Christ.

Third, some Bible teachers suggest that Paul’s missionary journeys even follow the route of the Gentile nations mentioned in

^a Genesis 12:3 ^b Matthew 28:18-20

Genesis 10. This may further indicate that Paul saw his Christian ministry as a continuation of the ministry of Abraham.

Fourth, before his conversion to the worship of Jesus Christ, Paul had prided himself in being a Jew descended from Abraham and not a Gentile like those people he despised.^a However, Abraham was not originally a Jew but rather a Gentile whom God raised up to be the beginning of a new nation founded upon the 12 tribes of Israel that was supposed to worship Jesus and be missionaries sent into the earth just like Jesus' 12 disciples. Furthermore, in Stephen's great speech in Acts 7:2-4, we find that God called Abraham from the geographic area of Babylon, which likely indicates that Abraham was not only a Gentile when God saved Him, but also a despised Babylonian. All of this is to show that God indeed loves all nations of the earth and can save anyone anywhere and it was this insight that transformed Paul to preach the gospel of free grace to all peoples. Amazingly, had Paul met Abraham before he was called by God as a Gentile and circumcised himself to become a Hebrew, Paul, as a godless pagan enemy of God, would possibly have killed Abraham in the name of being a faithful son of Abraham.

Fifth, Paul did not get his gospel of free grace and salvation by faith alone solely from the writings of the biblical prophets because the prophets got their insights from reading the Law/Pentateuch, and Paul received his insights from reading both the Law and the Prophets. In the Flood account of Noah in Genesis 6-9, we find that, contrary to much popular opinion, Noah was not spared from the flood because he was a righteous man. In Genesis 6:6-7 we read, "The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them.'" Simply, everyone on the earth in that day was evil all the time – including Noah. Like

^a Philippians 3:2-11

Abraham, Noah was a sinner saved by grace alone to a new life and this is exactly the gospel Paul preaches. Genesis 6:8 says, “But Noah found favor [grace] in the eyes of the LORD.” This is the first occurrence of the Hebrew word for grace in the Bible and what it tells us is that Noah was sinful like everyone else, but that God gave Noah grace while the rest of humanity received God’s justice in the Flood. Genesis 6:9 says, “This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God.” In what sounds to be very Pauline, Moses tells us that Noah was totally depraved, but that God gave grace to Noah and saved him from judgment. He said it was God’s grace that made Noah a righteous man, covered his sins to make him blameless, and enabled him to walk with God. At the end of the Flood in Genesis 8:20, we see that the first thing Noah did after exiting the Ark was worship God for His grace and offer a burnt offering sacrifice of atonement for his sin, which prefigured the atoning death of Jesus Christ for Noah’s sin. Simply, upon seeing that God had destroyed all sinners but himself and some family members, Noah was keenly aware that he was as sinful and deserving of death as those who had perished in the flood and needed atonement and grace to cover his sin. Likewise, Paul’s gospel throughout the New Testament is that no one is righteous, no one seeks God, and no one deserves to be saved from God’s just wrath – just like Abraham and Noah. But God in His kindness gives grace to some people that makes them righteous, saves them from His just wrath, has Jesus’ death atone for their sin (thereby making them blameless before Him), and enables them to walk with and worship God humbly – just like Abraham and Noah.

Sixth, Genesis 28:3 says, “May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community [church] of peoples.” In this verse, God’s intentions from Abraham is that there would be a community/church (the word here is the Hebrew word for church) of peoples from many nations. This same idea is again stated in Genesis 35:11 and 48:3, further showing that God wanted the nation of Israel that came

from Abraham to be missionaries bringing the good news of God to the nations of the earth. His desire was that there would be a universal church comprised of the tribes, tongues, and peoples of the earth, which we read are worshiping Jesus in Heaven in the book of Revelation.

Lastly, Paul echoed God's intentions to have a church of many nations worshiping Jesus from Genesis in Romans 16:25-27 writing, "Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."

Genesis Points to Jesus

Some people prefer the New Testament to the Old Testament because they wrongly believe that only the New Testament is about Jesus. However, it was Jesus Himself who taught that the Old Testament was primarily about Him.

In John 5:39-40, while arguing with the theologians in His day, Jesus chastised them saying, "You diligently study the Scriptures [Old Testament] because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me yet you refuse to come to me to have life." And in John 5:46 Jesus said, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me."

Following His Resurrection, Luke 24:27 records an occasion where Jesus opened the Old Testament to teach about Himself saying, "And beginning with Moses [this included Genesis] and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." Likewise, in Luke 24:44-45, in speaking to His disciples we read that, "He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses [this included Genesis], the Prophets and the Psalms.' Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."

Simply, when Genesis is rightly interpreted, it reveals Jesus. Therefore, to help you see Jesus in Genesis, I invite you to note the following references to Jesus in Genesis:

- In Genesis 3:15, Jesus is referred to as the male seed (also translated offspring) of the woman who would crush Satan. In Galatians 3:16, Paul makes it clear that Moses was speaking of Jesus by saying, “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ.”
- In Genesis 9:27, Noah prophesies that God would tent with (meaning to come and dwell with) his son Japheth. In John 1:14, we see that Jesus ultimately fulfilled this prophecy when He became a man and pitched His tent among us.
- In Genesis 12:1-7, God promised Abram that he would have a singular seed/offspring that would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth. This descendant is Jesus according to Matthew 1:1-2, which says, “...the genealogy of Jesus Christ... the son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers...”
- In Genesis 14:18-23, Abraham encountered Melchizedek, who was the first priest in the Bible, and also the king of Salem, which is short for Jerusalem – a city that did not yet exist on earth. Since Hebrews 7:1-28 says he had no parents, no beginning or end, was a Gentile and not a Jew, and was greater than Abraham, many Bible teachers have believed that Melchizedek was actually an appearance of Jesus before His birth to Mary, as Jesus is both our High Priest and the King of Kings. While it is possible that Melchizedek was an appearance of Jesus before his birth (a Christophony), the Bible simply does not make this clear, so we cannot be dogmatic on this point, as it also may have been a man, an angel, other divine being, or a type foreshadowing Jesus Christ. In any event, we can reasonably assume that, at the

very least, Melchizedek pointed to Jesus Christ.

- In Genesis 15:6, we read that Abraham was counted righteous by faith in God (not human works or merit) as the pattern of salvation for all believers. Paul comments on this Scripture in Romans 4:1-5 saying, “What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture [Genesis 15:6] say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.’ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...”
- In Genesis 16:7-16, the angel (meaning messenger) of the Lord came and spoke to Hagar. She called that messenger God, and the angel did not rebuke her for worshiping Him. This indicates it was probably Jesus (before His incarnation to Mary, called a Christophony) who appeared to Hagar.
- In Genesis 18:1-33, three men visited Abraham, and Abraham bowed down to one of the men and called him Lord. Abraham then ate with the men before having a lengthy conversation with them about the fate of the sinful city of Sodom. One of the men who is referred to as the Lord stated He was going to destroy in judgment. This likely means that Abraham was speaking to Jesus and two angels.
- In Genesis 22:1-19, we see the shadow of God the Father and God the Son, as Abraham’s promised son Isaac was born miraculously years after the promise of his birth was given. Father Abraham loved his son but was willing for him to be sacrificed at this place where the temple was later built. This is the same place where Jesus was killed, as the beloved Son carried the cross on His own back and willingly laid down His life as a burnt offering for sin. According to John 8:56-59 and Hebrews 11:17-19, this foreshadowing of Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac was fulfilled in Jesus.

- In Genesis 22:11-18, the angel (or messenger) of the Lord spoke to Abraham, blessing him and promising to make his seed/offspring (Jesus) a blessing to the nations of the earth. This angel appears to be the Lord Jesus Christ because He says that Abraham was obeying Him and that He would bless Abraham as the “Lord”.
- In Genesis 28:10-22, Jacob had a dream that Heaven opened up to him with a stairway connecting Heaven and earth. Jesus taught in John 1:51 that Jacob’s dream is fulfilled in Him, as He is the connection point between Heaven in the unseen realm and earth in the seen realm saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”
- In Genesis 32:22-32, Jacob wrestled with God, which was likely Jesus before His incarnation birth through His mother Mary.
- In Genesis 49:8-12, Jacob’s family grew to twelve sons, but it was his fourth son, Judah, whom God chose to continue the messianic line through. This was because he repented of what he had done to his brother, Joseph, by asking to be taken in place of his youngest brother, Benjamin. As noted in this passage, this promised Ruler would bring so much prosperity that men would tie their donkey to a vine without worrying about damaging it, since they would be so plenty. At His coming, the harvest will be so abundant that people would wash their garments in wine, people’s eyes would be dark from drinking much wine, and their teeth white from drinking much milk. According to Numbers 24:17, Hebrews 1:8, and Revelation 19:15-16, this Last Days King is King Jesus.

Creation Points to the New Creation

It’s not hard to convince folks that the planet is cursed. Every day we see the death toll as a stark reminder that something has gone terribly wrong and this planet, which is supposed to be our home, feels more like a house of horrors.

The problem, ultimately, is not viruses, tornadoes, hurricanes,

earthquakes, or politicians – even though each of these is a problem. You are the problem. I am the problem. We are the problem. Starting with our first parents, humanity has brought a curse on the earth through sin. God made the world “very good”, and we’ve made it very bad. Familiar with Genesis since he was a boy, the Apostle Paul started his magnum opus, the book of Romans, with God as Creator to explain what has gone wrong with history and humanity, and how Jesus Christ will make it all right.

Romans 1:18-20 says, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities--His eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

The same creation reported in Genesis is a sermon preached by God to all people that reveals something of His essence through His works in the same way that artwork reveals something of the artist. Everything from the dirt we walk upon to the air we breathe and beauty we delight in are gifts God has given to draw us into relationship with Him.

There was a day when humanity was given dominion over a perfect planet, enjoyed access to God along with angels and other divine beings in the realm of Eden, were blessed in every way with no needs, and were only and always happy, holy, and healthy. Then, like an arsonist that sets their own house on fire, we pulled hell up into Heaven with our rebellion.

Today, we keep going on vacations, moving houses, and exploring locations hoping to find what feels to us like a Heavenly home...to no avail. So, we push our longings out past this life, hoping there must be more than this world and this life. In his great book *Heaven*, Randy Alcorn says anthropologists tell us that every culture has some concept of a better life after death. While these visions vary, they reveal that we were made for more, never

feel quite at home on this planet, and are all hoping to find our way Home somehow someday.

In church, you will hear varying details about Hell depending upon how much steel your preacher has in their spine. You will also hear about how to get to Heaven – by accepting Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Oddly, you will be given a few obscure references to what Heaven is actually like without much explanation.

Most people don't know much about Heaven, and what they think is often just plain wrong. The average person thinks of Heaven as the boring place where we're all chubby babies sitting on clouds wearing diapers plunking harps for all eternity pretending that we like it. The average person also thinks that all the people with tattoos who play guitar, smoke cigarettes, and drink beer end up at a party that never ends in Hell. The message is clear, Heaven is for people who are dull and boring, Hell is for people who are fun and exciting. Like everything Satan says, this is a lie.

Satan got kicked out of Heaven and he's been bitter ever since. He came to Heaven on earth, Eden, to get humanity kicked out of Heaven as well. Ever since, Satan has undertaken an incredibly effective fake news campaign to misrepresent Heaven and Hell and encourage folks to seek to create their own little heaven on earth without God. The truth is, we all seek to be happy and healthy, and that should lead us to God and Heaven rather than Satan and rebellion. Heaven exists right now, and Heaven will come to the earth with the party that never ends hosted by King Jesus!

Picking up on the theme of the curse from Genesis 3, Paul tells us that the effects of our sin in Creation won't last forever, and that God will return to His design plan of Genesis, saying in Romans 8:18-22, "...the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole

creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth...”

Imagine how productive we would be if the world was perfect. What do you think a perfect sunset looks like or a perfect relationship feels like? Imagine a world in which no one gets sick, no one dies, no wars are fought, and no graves are dug.

Genesis reports that when God finished making people, and giving us His planet, everything was “very good”. Then, through sin and the curse, we made everything very bad. The good news is that, even though we change, and Heaven and earth change, God does not change, and God does not change His plan for His people and His planet. The same plan that God had in the opening pages of Genesis is the same plan He still has for all eternity.

When we think of Heaven, we need to stop thinking about leaving this planet and instead think about what it will be like when Jesus’ prayer is answered, and the Kingdom of Heaven comes to earth, and God’s will is done from one end of the cosmos to the other. God does not abandon His design plan from Creation. God will not be defeated, dissuaded, or distracted. God remains focused on going back to where He started and sticking with His plan to have human life flourishing on earth and ruled by Heaven, which comes to earth. Simply stated, God got it right the first time and will get it right, even though we have made everything go wrong.

This explains why the Bible uses lots of words like restore, redeem, resurrect, renew, etc. Acts 3:21 looks forward to, “the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets.” God will go back to where He started to lift the curse, sentence Satan, raise the dead, and make the realm of Eden in the unseen world visible in the seen realm of earth, overtaking and liberating all that has been cursed by our sin to be cured by His Son.

The analogy that Paul uses for life as we experience it right now is childbirth. I was present for the birth of our five children and can attest that, from pregnancy through birth, the phrase “pains of childbirth” is spot on. I have never met a woman who likes the process of childbirth. I have met many women who love the child

they birthed. For this Christian, this life of screaming, weeping, stressing, and pushing is our version of birth where God will bring new, beautiful, and worthwhile life on the other side. Like childbirth, this painful process is worth the new life birthed on the other side of all the pain. For the Christian, this frames our love for Heaven and infuses our present pain with incredible meaning, as one day we will have the same joy as a new mom holding her baby.

When all is said and done, the Bible promises that the unseen Kingdom of God in the spiritual realm and the seen Kingdom of God in the physical realm will reunite in the new Heavens and new earth:

- Isaiah 65:17 – I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.
- 2 Peter 3:13 – ...we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.
- Revelation 21:1-3 – I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God... And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them.”

Right now, there is a place called Heaven that exists in the unseen realm. Living there are God, divine beings including angels, and departed saints who loved Jesus in their life on earth. When you die, you go there to be with them if you love Jesus.

According to the Bible, there is one reality ruled by God over two realms. One realm is the spirit world where God, divine beings (e.g. angels), and departed saints live right now. The other realm is the physical world where human beings live right now.

Originally, these two realms were connected. The Garden of Eden in Genesis was literally Heaven on earth where the unseen realm and seen realm connected. This explains why Adam and Eve met with God there, were not shocked when a divine being showed up (Satan), and saw an angel keep them from the tree of life once

they sinned. Once we sinned, the realms were disconnected. So, upon death, the two parts of our being are also disconnected. Our body goes into the ground awaiting resurrection. Our soul goes to be with God.

The apostle Paul says this is “far better” than our current life on earth and all we have is “gain” to look forward to “at home with the Lord”. So, if someone loves Jesus and dies today, they are with Jesus in the spiritual heaven. That, however, is not their final destination. Theologians call this the “intermediate heaven”. When our family moved to Arizona in 2015, we left our home out of state, moved into a VRBO rental home for a few months, and then moved into our new home. The intermediate heaven is a bit like VRBO rental. It’s nice enough, but you’re not living there forever.

One day, maybe in hours or centuries, Jesus Christ will return to this sin-cursed tear-soaked world with Heaven packed in His cosmic UHaul as the King and everyone and everything in His Kingdom make the big move to earth. Just as Jesus brought Heaven and earth together at His first coming, He will bring the New Heaven and New Earth together at His Second Coming.

You will have a perfectly healthy physical body. You will visit the city of God, as well as other cities around the world. You will have meaningful work to do, plans to make, and dreams to chase. You will swim in a lake and raft in a river. You will enjoy family and friends, eat a perfect cheeseburger, and sleep soundly every night. Your needs will be met, your fears will be gone, and for all eternity, you will join all of humanity glorifying God by learning, growing, building, creating, and loving. You will meet the folks you read about in the Bible, hang out with angels and other divine beings, and laugh more than any other time in your life.

The New Earth is the old earth perfected, with Heaven thrown in as a bonus. What Adam and Eve experienced in Eden is what believers will experience forever. God’s divine design plan in Genesis was perfect, and He has not changed His plan despite our sin. This is the good news of the Kingdom of God that Jesus talked about and what we look forward to in the end. The good news of

Heaven on other side of this life gets us through hell in this life. As Winston Churchill famously said, “If you’re going through hell, keep going.” For the believer, this life is as close to Hell as we will get, and the key is to keep going until we get to the New Heaven and New Earth with God’s plan of a new genesis to make it all possible.

IN THE BEGINNING

CHAPTER 2

Personal and Group Study Guide for Genesis 27-36

Why Are Siblings the Most Frustrating Relationships?

Scripture to Read: Genesis 27:1-28:9

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

Genesis 27:36 – Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?"

Commentary:

Abraham's son Isaac married the lovely Rebekah and they had twin boys – Jacob and Esau. Unfortunately, the parents played favorites, as Esau who was born first was a daddy's boy, and Jacob who was born second was a momma's boy. These boys, who began fighting in their mother's womb, continued their fight in birth and throughout life.^a

From this point in Genesis 27 until his death in Genesis 35:28-29, Isaac is not mentioned again as he fades to the background and is replaced by his sons, Jacob and Esau, as the focus of the Genesis story. Early in their lives, Jacob the trickster took the family birthright from his foolish brother Esau. Now, this account reports how Jacob also stole Esau's blessing.

Isaac was a very elderly man when he chose to bless them, which would have shaped the rest of their life, because it granted

^a Genesis 25:22-26

them spiritual and physical blessings that were irrevocable, because blessing is ultimately always in God's hands. In this way, the blessing served much more like a prophecy than a simple prayer.

Because Esau was the firstborn and his favorite, Isaac sought to bless Esau instead of Jacob. However, Rebekah, like Eve and Sarah before her, sought to take matters into her own hands because she favored Jacob over Esau. She devised a deceitful plan to rob her son Esau of his blessing, and in her trickery, we get a glimpse of where Jacob may have learned how to scheme.

Isaac was duped by the plan and Jacob stole Esau's deathbed blessing. While Esau understandably weeps bitterly, the sad truth is that neither son appears very godly or worthy of the family blessings promised through Abraham.

We then learn that Esau is so angry at his brother that he intends to kill him as Cain did Abel in Genesis 4. So, Rebekah sent her favored son Jacob back to live with her brother Laban to allow Esau to cool down out of fear that she might lose her only two sons due to her sin. Her hope would be that she would only lose her beloved son for a few days, but he remained away from home for some 20 years because her brother Laban was a conniving trickster like her, as the upcoming chapters explain.

Before leaving, Jacob was blessed by his father and instructed to marry only a woman who belonged to God so that the promises of the covenant would continue through his family line. To spite his parents, Esau intentionally married yet another godless wife in addition to his other wives that had brought nothing but grief to his parents.

This entire family history, which continues in ensuing chapters of Genesis, shows how our relationship with our siblings can be incredibly frustrating. It often starts with parental favoritism, as was the case with Isaac and Rebekah. This led to division between the parents, causing division between the children, and ensuing division for generations.

Theologically, this section raises the question as to whether or

not human sin will continue to grow, as it did in the days of Noah, if a trickster like Jacob is the man acting as the head of the human side of the covenant. Since his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham both walked with God, the question remains whether or not faith will continue into a third generation through Jacob. This sets the stage for the next events in Genesis.

Dig Deeper:

- Look up Malachi 1:2-3 and Romans 9:10-13 to better understand God's sovereign choosing of Jacob over Esau.
- Look up Hebrews 11:20 to learn more about Isaac's blessing.
- Look up Hebrews 12:16-17 for more insight on this story.

Talk it Out. Walk it Out.

- What sins do we see Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau commit in this section?
- In what way is God's choice of working through Jacob or Esau truly the lesser of two evils?
- What do we learn about the importance of a man selecting the right wife from this section of Genesis?
- What do we learn about God from this section of Genesis, particularly His sovereignty to bring good through human sin?

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IN THE BEGINNING

What's It Like When Heaven Visits Earth?

Scripture to Read: Genesis 28:10-22

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

Genesis 28:12 –He [Jacob] had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Commentary:

In the opening chapters of Genesis, we saw that Heaven and earth were together. The Garden of Eden, meaning Garden of Delight, was the connecting point between the unseen spiritual realm of Heaven, and the seen physical realm of earth. There, God met with Adam and Eve and angels joined them.

When Adam and Eve sinned, human beings were kicked out of Eden and no longer had access to the connection point between Heaven and earth. On occasion, God did bring Heaven to earth. Examples include the Tabernacle, Temple, and of course the body of Jesus Christ. In Genesis 28, Jacob's ladder is reported as how God sent angels down to bring Heaven to earth in the very place that the Temple would later be built as the place is named Bethel meaning "house of God".

At this point in Genesis, the covenant promises have been applied from the less-than-perfect-yet-faithful Abraham to his less-than-perfect-but-likewise-faithful son Isaac to Isaac's sinfully deceptive son Jacob, who stole both the birthright and blessing from his older brother Esau. Jacob, who loved staying home, was driven from his home out of fear that his brother would murder him. Alone for the first time, he possesses the covenant blessing but lacks the relationship with and faith in God that his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham possessed.

Genesis takes a very important and dramatic turn when God appears to Jacob at night to bless him with the promises of land, descendants, and blessing for all nations, much like he had his grandfather Abraham in Genesis 15. After God appears, Jacob

recognizes Him and names the place where God had met him “Bethel”, which means “house of God.” Yet, it is questionable whether Jacob was yet truly converted as a believer because his prayer to God remains conditional and therefore lacks faith. Jacob, in essence, seeks to barter with God by promising that, if God blessed him, then he would worship Him.

Theologically, the point of this section is to show us that, for the first time in his life, Jacob has encountered God. Subsequently, this is the beginning of Jacob not living under the faith of his parents but, for the first time, beginning his own relationship with God so that the God of Abraham and Isaac could also be known as the God of Jacob. The turn in Jacob’s heart toward God first appears in his declaration that he will tithe to God, which is the first instance of worship we have seen from him thus far in Genesis and may indicate his conversion.

As was the case with both Noah and Abraham before him, Jacob is likewise a sinner undeserving of God’s grace. Although Jacob shows no interest in God, it is God who seeks out Jacob for a covenant relationship, which is continually the pattern for all believers throughout human history. Indeed, as God stated in his covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17, His blessing was to be responded to by obedient faith and He would have it no other way, even though Jacob would like to have God bless him without him honoring God.

Dig Deeper:

- In Jacob’s dream, Heaven comes down to earth. How does Heaven come down according to Matthew 1:23, John 1:51 and Revelation 21:2?
- What is the contrast between the city and tower of Babel where people go up in an attempt to be like God (Genesis 11) and Jacob’s Ladder where God comes down to us?

Talk it Out. Walk it Out.

- How is Jacob’s Ladder, where God comes down to us, a foreshadowing of the coming of Jesus Christ?

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- What do we learn about the importance of someone having their own faith and not simply living under the faith of their parents?
- What do we learn about God from His pursuit of the ungodly Jacob for a covenant relationship?

NOTES

What Happens When Adult Children Have a Controlling Parent?

Scripture to Read: Genesis 29:1-30

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

Genesis 29:20 – So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

Commentary:

After beginning his relationship with God on the way, Jacob finally arrives at the home of his uncle Laban, who is the brother of his mother, Rebekah. There, Jacob is welcomed into the family.

What transpires next is a fitting example of Jacob eventually reaping what he sowed. After tricking his brother Esau out of both his birthright and blessing, Jacob seems to think his life is going pretty well as he escaped home before his brother could murder him, was welcomed into his uncle's household, and met the woman of his dreams, the very lovely Rachel. He even kisses her before they are married, the only time in the Bible where a believing man kisses a woman who is not yet his wife.

Rachel had a sister named Leah who was 14 years older. Both girls were unmarried, Rachel likely because of her younger age and Leah because she had a wandering crooked eye. Jacob wanted to marry one of the sisters, and, not unexpectedly, chose the younger and more attractive sister with functional eyes. The tricky Laban made Jacob the trickster work for him for seven years to earn the right to marry his youngest daughter, Rachel. This was likely necessary because Jacob arrived empty-handed and would have to work to pay the bride price.

Finally, Jacob got to marry Rachel. But, apparently Jacob had more than a few drinks in him, the face of his bride was covered during the wedding, and the candles were snuffed out in their bridal chambers that night because, when Jacob rolled over to gaze into the eyes of his lovely wife, he was staring into the crooked eyes of Leah instead of the lovely eyes of Rachel.

Laban tricked the trickster and married off his oldest daughter.

When Jacob confronted Laban for doing to him exactly what Jacob had done to Esau, his uncle simply stated that it was customary for the oldest child to be provided for before the younger. Laban's reasoning was true, even though his actions were wicked. And, in bitter irony, the godless Laban was in fact acting godlier than Jacob, who ended up in Laban's household because he robbed his brother of the rights of the firstborn. In this we see that God did not look favorably on Jacob's deceitful actions and sought to teach him a lesson through 14 years of hard work.

Jacob loved Rachel so much that he worked another seven years for her father Laban to earn her hand in marriage. Jacob finally married Rachel after 14 years of waiting and loved her more than her sister Leah. This sad truth will lead to many great troubles in the coming scenes of Genesis as the struggle between Jacob and Esau is echoed in the struggle between Rachel and Leah, as well as their sons.

Laban serves as a tragic example of a controlling parent of adult children. He is so determined to have Leah married first, and enrich his own estate, that he sets up an abusive family legacy with horrible division and competition, as we will learn in the ensuing chapters of this tragic family tale.

Dig Deeper:

- How is this story of Jacob the trickster being tricked an illustration of the principle in Galatians 6:7-8?
- What does Leviticus 18:18 say about this kind of marriage with one man and two sisters?
- Note the occurrences of the word "serve", "served", "serving", and "worked" in this section to understand the high price Jacob paid for Rachel.

Talk it Out. Walk it Out.

- Even though Laban is ungodly and cruel, how is God using Laban, who is much like Jacob, to change Jacob's character? How has God used some bad people doing bad things to help grow good character in you?

IN THE BEGINNING

- How is Laban tricking Jacob to marry Leah actually cruel in light of Proverbs 30:21, 23a? Why is it better to not marry than to force someone into marriage who does not love you?

NOTES

Why Should We Not Sleep With or Marry More Than One Person?

Scripture to Read: Genesis 29:31-30:24

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

Genesis 29:31, 30:22 – When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb.

Commentary:

At this point in the story, Jacob is now an old man (perhaps in his 80's) with two wives who are sisters. Leah is hated by her husband, who was tricked into marrying her, and Rachel is loved by her husband. The promise of many sons has not yet occurred until this chapter where we witness at least seven years of family drama and the birth of sons, and a daughter, born to four mothers who are often pregnant together.

This scene of Genesis shows God's blessing to Jacob through children despite the sin in his family. Because Jacob loved his wife Rachel but did not love his other wife, Leah (literally hated her, we learn in the Hebrew) God chose to close the womb of Rachel and open the womb of Leah. In this we see the loved wife childless and barren like Sarah and Rebekah before her in the covenant family line.

In very tragic words, Leah articulates her heart's desire that, through bearing Jacob a son, he would love her. God then gave Leah three more sons – Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Leah's sister Rachel responded to the births with jealousy and anger, much like Esau had responded to the blessing of her his brother Jacob.

Rachel demanded that her husband give her children, or she would die, and these words later proved to be both prophetic and tragic in Genesis 35:16-19. And, in a demonstration of growing faith, Jacob rightly stated that her womb was ultimately controlled by God.

Rather than trusting God, as his father Isaac had in waiting 20 years for him to be born, or turning to God in prayer, the couple

copied the sin Sarah, who gave her husband Abraham to sleep with her maidservant Hagar. Much like Eve, Sarah, and Rebekah before her, Rachel took matters into her own hands rather than trusting God in faith and Jacob went along with the sin, ultimately conceiving Dan and Naphtali with Rachel's maidservant. Rachel appears very godless in all of this as she is pushing her husband to have sex with another woman, and she attributes the children born to that woman as God enabling her to beat her sister Leah, whom she is very jealous of.

Not to be outsinned, Leah too pushes her husband Jacob to sleep with her maidservant. Leah named the son Gad, which means "luck", and she failed to see that human life even comes from God's hand. Jacob continued to sleep with Leah's maidservant and had another son, which Leah named Asher (meaning "happy") because it made her happy.

The hillbilly soap opera gets even weirder when Jacob's firstborn son Reuben finds some mandrakes that he gives to his mother Leah. Rachel trades sex with their husband Jacob for Leah's mandrakes, which may have been considered an ancient aphrodisiac. Happy to oblige, Jacob had sex with Leah that night and conceived yet another son, Issachar. With bizarre reasoning, Leah attributes the birth of this son to God blessing her for having her husband have sex with her servant, which is a simple way of her saying God was so happy about the adultery and bigamy that He was blessing her. Leah went on to have another son and eventually a daughter.

Apparently, somewhere in all of this drama, Rachel prayed to God, who answered her prayer and gave her a son they named Joseph, who was the youngest of the 12 until Rachel also conceived Benjamin in Genesis 35:18. The other 10 sons and one daughter were conceived with his unloved wife Leah and the maidservants of Rachel and Leah. The daughters of Laban appear to be a lot like their deceiving father.

Through it all, God would preserve His covenant through Jacob's sons, who would become the 12 tribes of Israel through

whom Jesus would be born to deal with the human sin problem that was so evident in Jacob's family. The theme of this section, as with the rest of Genesis and the Bible, is that God is the hero that rescues self-destructive sinners from themselves by His grace and mercy alone.

Dig Deeper:

- What does Revelation 21:1-12 reveal about the importance of the 12 sons who came from the four scheming women in Genesis?
- Look up the places where Jesus mentions the 12 tribes (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30) as well as other places throughout the New Testament (Acts 26:7; James 1:1).

Talk it Out. Walk it Out.

- After seeing God's sovereignty over the womb of Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, what do we learn about motherhood? How does this help set the stage for God's sovereignty over the womb of Mary also?
- How does this story demonstrate the great evils that occur from polygamy and adultery?
- What can we learn from this story about controlling parents of adult children who lack wisdom and godliness in pushing for the future they want for their children, even if it's not God's will?

NOTES

When Do You Need to Sever Ties with Toxic Family Members?

Scripture to Read: Genesis 30:25-31:55

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

Genesis 31:42 – “If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you.”

Commentary:

We often allow family members to do and say things that cause us harm that we would never tolerate from anyone else. Sometimes, these family members get healed up, repent of their ways, and make it easier to do life with them. Other times, toxic family members do not change at all, and leave us the hard choice of continuing in an abusive relationship or moving on and severing ties with them.

After 20 years working for his father-in-law Laban, Jacob wanted to return home to his mother Rebekah and father Isaac. Through demonic divination, Laban learned that he had been blessed to become a wealthy and powerful man because of Jacob's presence, which was true because the covenant blessing of God accompanied Jacob. So, Laban, the continually crooked dealmaker, sought to retain Jacob by offering to finally pay him a reasonable salary after 20 years of nearly free but fruitful labor.

Like his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham, Jacob entrusted himself to God's plan, in faith. Jacob rejected Laban's offer and entrusted himself to the Lord's provision alone. God honored Jacob's faith and made him into a very wealthy man. And, while it may appear as if Jacob is taking advantage of Laban in this account, the truth is that God is simply righting a wrong and giving to Jacob what he had earned during 20 years of faithful work for Laban.

God then spoke to Jacob in 31:3 as he had to his grandfather Abraham in Genesis 12:1, calling him to leave what had been his home for 20 years to return to his family. Jacob responded in faith,

for the most part. He loaded up his family and left Laban's home but did so secretly, without telling Laban, perhaps because he feared that the clever Laban would find a way to keep him from leaving. Jacob's wives Rachel and Leah apparently have developed some degree of faith in God as they are willing to leave their own family like Rebekah had^a because they were ready to live by faith in God, trusting his blessing.^b

Laban did not, at first, know that Jacob and his family had left because he was busy in the height of sheep shearing season. When Laban learned that his daughters and grandchildren were gone, he and his relatives pursued Jacob for seven days until they caught up with him. Humorously, the same Laban who tricked Jacob into marrying both of his daughters, became rich because of God's blessing upon Jacob's 20 years of labor for him, and cheated Jacob by changing his wages 10 times complained that Jacob had been deceptive with him.

However, God protected Jacob by appearing to Laban, commanding him not to harm Jacob in any way. Laban's only other charge of wrongdoing against him by Jacob was accusing Jacob of stealing his household god/idol. Jacob was unaware that his beloved wife Rachel had stolen her father's god and hid it on her camel. Laban searched their belongings, looking for his god to no avail. He asked to search the bags on the camel his daughter Rachel was riding, but she tricked her father the trickster, by cleverly lying that she could not dismount the camel because of her female cycle, thereby using a long-standing female excuse that remains perennially popular.

Jacob honored God by attributing all of the blessing he and Laban had received as having come directly from Him.^c Then Jacob and Laban entered a covenant whereby Jacob agreed to take no more wives than Laban's two daughters and that he would care for them both. Laban kissed his daughters and grandchildren goodbye and the men parted company as Laban returned to his home, as did

^a Genesis 24:58 ^b Genesis 31:16 ^c Genesis 31:42

Jacob, which sets the stage for Jacob to see the state of his brother Esau, who 20 years earlier had vowed to kill him for stealing his birthright and blessing.

Dig Deeper:

- Compare and contrast Jacob's genuine dream from God and Laban's demonic divination, which is a counterfeit for God's revelation.
- The same Hebrew word for Jacob's demonic divination is found in Leviticus 19:26 and 2 Kings 17:17. Look these Scriptures up to get a clearer picture of Laban's demonic evil.
- What does Deuteronomy 18:10 say about God's people using demonic divination?
- How are Laban's sons a lot like, and loyal to, their demonic dad?

Talk it Out. Walk it Out.

- What do we learn about God from this scene in Genesis, particularly His blessing?
- What parts of this story indicate that Jacob is growing in faith, that his wives have come to faith, and that Laban is still not converted?
- How has God been faithful to the covenant promises He gave to Jacob?
- How do we see that sometimes people are blessed by God simply because a believer is in their life?
- Why was it important for Rachel and Leah to choose to leave their demonic dad in light of Genesis 2:24?

NOTES

IN THE BEGINNING

How Can We Wrestle With God in a Good Way?

Scripture to Read: Genesis 32:1-32

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

Genesis 32:28 – Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

Commentary:

There are times in life that it feels like we are in an exhausting battle. Sometimes we even battle with God – struggling to accept His will, unwilling to agree with His word, or fighting to get our own way and not do things His way. In this scene of Genesis, Jacob literally wrestles with God in a way that ends up being a good blessing for His future. Jacob left home as a single man and now returns home as a husband and father who has been toughened up by years of abuse under his father-in-law, Laban.

After 20 years away, Jacob's homecoming journey was interrupted by two angels who met him at the border of the Promised Land. Not knowing if his brother Esau, whom he had not seen for 20 years, still wanted to kill him, Jacob sent messengers ahead to notify Esau that he sought peace and wanted to bless him with gifts intended to at least, in part, make up for the blessing he stole. The messengers returned to inform Jacob that Esau was coming...with four hundred men who were either an entourage to welcome Jacob or an army to slaughter him. Understandably worried for the worst, to protect his household, Jacob split his people and animals into two groups hoping that one could flee and survive if attacked.

In Genesis 32:9-12, we then see the faith of Jacob, which has been apparently growing slowly over the 20 years since he first encountered God personally, as he prayed to God in faith that God would be faithful to His covenant promises to bless and protect him. Jacob then compiled a very large gift for Esau and had it delivered to his brother.

Before yet encountering his brother, God again appeared to Jacob in a very significant way. While alone one night, a man who is called God came to Jacob and it seems likely this was Jesus. Though Jacob was at this time an elderly man, he wrestled with the man (either an angel or probably Jesus) all night, unwilling to give up until he was blessed. Jacob started wrestling with his twin brother in their mother's womb, wrestled metaphorically with Laban for years, and now wrestles with God.

At daybreak, the men stopped wrestling and the man changed Jacob's name (meaning "trickster") to Israel (meaning "wrestles with God and perseveres") as he has now matured from a man who excelled by trickery to a man of faith who trusted God to bless and protect him according to the covenant promises. Israel is mentioned over 1,800 times in the Bible, as this is a significant moment in world history.

Jacob had grown in faith to the degree that he had become a servant of God and was ready to re-enter the Promised Land as a new man with a new name. This is revealed by his prayer, which is the only recorded prayer of any length in Genesis. The man with whom Israel wrestled touched his hip so that he would limp for the rest of his days. This was a reminder to himself and everyone who saw him that God had been patient with him for many gracious years and had blessed him when he could have justly harmed or killed him at any point. The theological point of this account is that, throughout his life, Jacob was ultimately not wrestling with Laban or Esau, but rather God. The same is true for us. Often, like Jacob, whether we know it or not, our struggles are often with God who has a blessing for us if we fight through our battles to our blessings.

Dig Deeper:

- Who do you think wrestled with Jacob? Why?
- How is Jacob's life basically an illustration of 2 Timothy 2:13?
- What light does Hosea 12:2-6 shed on this scene in Genesis?

Talk it Out. Walk it Out.

- What are some seasons you have been wrestling with God to

the point that you were a bit confused and exhausted?

- What are some good, healthy, godly ways to work your frustrations and disagreements through in wrestling with God?
- Is there a season or experience in your life that left you limping but was ultimately a blessing because it made you a better and braver believer?

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IN THE BEGINNING

How Can God Reunite a Broken Family?

Scripture to Read: Genesis 33:1-20

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

Genesis 33:4 – But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.

Commentary:

Now empowered as a new man by God's blessing and his faith, Jacob/Israel no longer lingered at the back of his caravan hiding timidly from his brother Esau. Instead, he literally stepped up to the front line, not knowing if the 400 men his brother was traveling with were an entourage to greet and protect him or an army to slaughter him. Either way, Jacob/Israel had sufficient faith in God to protect him to put himself in harm's way for the first time in his life. Because he loved Rachel and their youngest son Joseph, Jacob/Israel kept them at the rear to protect them from possible harm.

The reunion between Jacob/Israel and his brother Esau after 20 long years of separation is a beautiful portrait of forgiveness, as Esau lovingly embraced his brother in forgiveness, welcoming him home. Jacob blessed his brother with generous gifts that he attributed as provided by God, though Esau did not need them because he too had become a wealthy man, a fact he did not attribute to God like Jacob/Israel did. Obviously, God had been working with great success in changing the hearts of both men.

Because of his many animals and young children, Jacob/Israel was delayed in making the journey all the way home. Esau offered to leave some men to protect Jacob's household, but by faith, he declined, stating that God would indeed protect him.

In this scene, we see the beginning of reconciliation between what had been a broken family and two brothers that had been at war for their entire lives. This scene should give us hope that it is possible to see a broken family healed, even if it has been decades of pain and distance.

Jacob then worshiped God by building an altar at Shechem,

which made sense as it was the first place that his grandfather Abraham had been visited by God and where Abraham built his own altar in Genesis 12:6-7. Genesis 33 closes with the wondrous portrait of the transformed Jacob worshiping the God not only of Abraham, and Isaac, but also now the God of Jacob. And much like the literary flow of the story of his grandfather Abraham, the story of Jacob/Israel appears to have climaxed, as he is now an older man blessed by God and ready to relax in peace. However, his presence in Shechem is an ominous hint at what awaits in the following chapter, because he was supposed to continue on to Bethel.

Dig Deeper:

- How does this reconciliation point to a bigger relationship reconciled between us and God according to 2 Corinthians 5:19-21?
- What does God's answering of Jacob's prayer in Genesis 32:9-12 teach us about prayer?
- What changes have you witnessed in Jacob's character as he transformed from the faithless Jacob to the faithful Israel?

Talk it Out. Walk it Out.

- Looking at this story and the chapters preceding it, what comes to mind regarding your own family, siblings, and family strife and drama?
- What do we learn about God from this scene in Genesis, particularly His patience?
- Is there any relationship with a family member that is a conflict, or so broken that it is severed, that others in the group can be praying for?

NOTES

IN THE BEGINNING

What Hope Does God Give to Assault Victims?

Scripture to Read: Genesis 34:1-31

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

Genesis 34:25, 31 – Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male...But they replied, "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?"

Commentary:

When he was nearly finally home after a 20-year absence, Israel (formerly Jacob) settled in Shechem. This father's decision proved to be as devastating as Lot's decision to settle in Sodom was earlier in Genesis, as he should have continued on to Bethel as he was supposed to.

Eventually, Jacob fathered 13 children with four different women, two of whom were wives (the sisters Rachel and Leah) and two of whom were maidservants to the wives. At this point in his life, Jacob had 12 children, as his son Benjamin was not yet born to complete the 12 Tribes of Israel. Therefore, he had 11 sons and only one daughter, a young woman named Dinah, at this time.

Dinah went out to visit other women who lived in the area that her father should not have moved her to. While she was out, the son of the man who ruled that area saw her. Whether he raped or seduced her is unclear, but the effect is, in essence, the same in that he defiled her and took her virginity dishonorably. Worse still, he was a pagan man and then wanted to marry her. Intermarriage between believers and unbelievers is condemned throughout Scripture, and in Genesis, Abraham was worried that Isaac would marry outside of the covenant as Ishmael had^a and Esau's intermarriage with the unbelieving Hittites was a source of great trouble.^b

Jacob kept quiet about the defilement of his daughter until her

^a Genesis 21:21, 24:3-4 ^b Genesis 26:34-35, 27:46, 28:8

brothers came home. The boys were rightly grieved and furious, as well as disgusted by the thought of allowing their sister to marry the unbelieving vile man. Dinah's brothers then devised a plan to use the covenant of circumcision instituted by God with Abraham in Genesis 17 in a deceitful manner to avenge their sister's defilement.

Dinah's brothers told the unsuspecting men of Shechem a strategic lie, that they would happily intermarry with them and share all of their great wealth. However, the Shechemites would first need to be circumcised and take upon themselves the sign of the covenant. Three days after the men were circumcised, and in great pain, only two of Dinah's eleven brothers, Simeon and Levi, strapped their swords to their sides and entered Shechem to slaughter every man and deliver their sister home safely.

Simeon and Levi then looted the entire city, taking for themselves all of the plunder including the women and animals. Seeing what his sons had done, Jacob rebuked them for putting his family in danger of attack from the other surrounding cities filled with allies of the Shechemites. His sons simply replied with the very poignant question, "Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?"

Theologically, the question begging to be answered is whether Jacob was right for rebuking his sons here, as well as in Genesis 49:5-7, or whether the brothers were correct in avenging their sister while their father sat idly by. The men all sin. Every man in this story sins either by commission (by doing evil or intending to do evil) or omission (by sitting idly and doing nothing to defend a young woman who was defiled).

Jacob is an awful father in this scene. At the end of Genesis 29, we read that Jacob hated his wife, Leah. Since Dinah was the daughter of Leah^a, Jacob's patient silence and indifference to her defilement indicates that he was not much of a loving father to her. Because Jacob failed to step up and courageously lead his

^a Genesis 30:19-21

family, he left a gaping need for leadership, which his vengeful sons filled. Therefore, had he led his family and quickly devised an appropriate response, the boys would have not had to. In Genesis 34:30, Jacob's concern after the slaughter of the Shechemites is selfishly only for "me" as he makes no mention of his suffering daughter. Therefore, it seems that Moses is trying to paint Jacob's actions in Genesis 34 as a temporary return to his old ways, playing favorites with his children as his mother Rebekah had.

The actions of Simeon and Levi are not godly and honorable either. They acted out of rage, lied, tricked men, committed murder, and looted an entire town. However, at least they loved their sister enough to avenge her honor, which is more than Jacob did and, while their intentions are noble, their actions are not, which may explain why Moses allows them to have the last words in the account, explaining their actions. Sadly, we see that the boys are tricksters like their father had been before God transformed him, as his sin manifests itself in his sons.

Therefore, in Jacob, we see yet another mini-Fall not unlike Adam, Noah, and Abraham. After entering covenant relationship with God, and seeing God save his life by gracious mercy, Jacob responded in sin because of his unbelief. As is the case throughout Genesis, human sin is used for God's purposes as the line of the covenant family is protected from intermarriage with the Shechemites through the slaughter of Simeon and Levi.

Thankfully, through this family would come Jesus Christ, who Himself was abused and defiled. Throughout Scripture, some dozen Hebrew and Greek words are used to explain sin in terms of defilement often translated into English as such things as defilement, uncleanness, and filth.^a Some examples of the causes of defilement include sexual sins such as sexual assault^b, incest^c, adultery^d, prostitution^e, and bestiality.^e Additionally, places in

^a e.g. Ps. 106:39; Pr. 30:12; Jer. 2:23, 20:30-31 ^b Gen. 34:5, 34:13, 34:27 ^c Gen. 49:4; 1 Chr. 5:1

^d Lev. 18:20; Num. 5:20, 5:27-29 ^e Lev. 21:7-9, 21:14 ^e Lev. 18:23

which defiling sin has been committed can also become defiled such as locations^a and marriage beds.^b

The results of defilement are many. Some people respond by accepting their defiled condition as their unchangeable identity and live filthy lives of sin marked by what has been to them, or by them, instead of what Jesus has done for them. Others are so paralyzed by shame that they essentially shut down emotionally and live isolated lives in an effort to not become vulnerable or hurt again. And still others seek to numb their pain through drugs, alcohol, sex, power, success, or whatever else enables them to either stop feeling or start feeling a measure of self-worth.

When we sin, we need to repent. When we are sinned against, we need to be cleansed. 1 John 1:7-9 says, “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

Sin has touched us all and retains life in the defiling darkness of shame, guilt, and isolation that either denies our woundedness or labors to hide it. Conversely, cleansing comes through living an open and honest life that brings our defilement into the light for Jesus and trustworthy Christian friends to see so that they can be the agents of healing in our life. It is Jesus’ death on the cross that forgives our sins and cleanses the stains on our soul resulting from sins we have committed and that have been committed against us. Because of His sacrifice for us, we can see ourselves by the righteousness Jesus gives us and not the defilement someone else has put on us.

Dig Deeper:

- What does 1 Timothy 5:2 teach young men about how to treat young women?

^a Lev. 18:24-30; Num. 35:34 ^b Hebrews 13:4

- How does the shame brought on by sexual sin here violate the report of God's intent in Genesis 2:25?
- Read Hebrews 12:2-3 and see what it says about Jesus taking our shame.

Talk it Out. Walk it Out.

- What does this story teach us about passive dads?
- What does this story teach us about the dangers of unbelieving worldly men with unhealthy sexual desires?
- What does this story teach us about vengeful angry young men?
- Why is it important that victims of sexual assault know that Jesus can take away any sense of defilement and make them clean (1 John 1:7-9)?

NOTES

IN THE BEGINNING

Why Are Some Families Blessed and Others Cursed?

Scripture to Read: Genesis 35:1-36:43

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation:

Genesis 35:28-29 – Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years. Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Commentary:

Jacob had fled from his home as an unmarried man roughly 40 years of age. Now, over 20 years later with two wives, 12 children, and great wealth, Jacob had nearly completed his long journey home to Bethel. After seeing that his sons shared some of his former trickery and self-sufficiency rather than faith in God, Jacob led his family in righteousness in a way that he failed to with the account of the violation of his daughter Dinah in Genesis 34.

God again spoke to Jacob to go to Bethel and, like Abraham before him, he obeyed. To purify his household that was apparently filled with spiritual lethargy, godless idols, and superstitions Jacob, commanded that all false gods and other spiritual paraphernalia be removed. In this act we see the progression of Jacob's faith. After wrestling with God and walking away with a more mature faith in Genesis 32, Jacob then witnessed the effects his weak faith had wrought among his children in Genesis 34. So, Jacob responded by rising to become the spiritual leader in his home before returning home to carry on the legacy of a faithful covenant keeper who obeyed God and raised covenant children who likewise obeyed God. After cleansing his household, Jacob worshiped God.

God responded to Jacob's faith by appearing to him again. God then blessed him and reiterated that his new name was Israel, though in Genesis 34, he had temporarily fallen back into acting like the old Jacob gripped by fear and self-preservation when he needed to live confidently by faith. God then reiterated His covenant promises of descendants, land, and blessing. Jacob responded by worshiping God, and we are now seeing a rhythm of

regular worship and intimacy with God that had been lacking in his life until this point. His faith has greatly matured as is evidenced by Moses now writing of him as Israel rather than Jacob frequently throughout the rest of Genesis.

As they were heading to Bethlehem, Jacob's beloved wife Rachel died giving birth to Jacob's youngest son, Benjamin, who became the last of the 12 sons who would become the 12 tribes of Israel. She died in Ephrath, also called Bethlehem, where Jesus was later born.^a

Shortly thereafter, Israel's son Reuben slept with his fathers' concubine, Bilhah. This great sin against his father cost him his position as the firstborn son.^b Now the two oldest boys and the third have all lost their place as firstborn through the sin of murder and adultery^c leaving Judah or Joseph next in line for the role of senior patriarch, which sets the stage for the rest of Genesis. Finally, after at least 20 long years away, Jacob returned home to see his father Isaac, the same place where his father Abraham had also been, as he now too had transformed from the young impetuous trickster to a patriarch of faith like his father and grandfather. Jacob's sons got to meet their grandfather, and then Isaac died at the age of 158 years old. His only two sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

By the beginning of Genesis 36, a number of people's stories have been wrapped up. Rebekah and Isaac have died. Their son Jacob, who was the son of the promise, has returned home with his 12 sons and without the wife he loved, Rachel. All that remains is to conclude the account of Isaac's other son, Esau, and his descendants. This need is met by Genesis 36, which concludes the account of Isaac's sons so that the covenant promises can be further explored in the next generation of men, the 12 sons of Israel.

There we discover that both Israel and Esau had been greatly blessed by God. The brothers were both so affluent that the land

^a Ruth 1:2, 4:11; 1 Sam. 17:12; Matt. 2:18 ^b Genesis 49:3-4; 1 Chronicles 5:1 ^c see Genesis 49:3-4

could no longer accommodate both of them, which forced them to separate so that they could both continue to prosper. Their separation is friendly and beneficial to them both and told in a fashion similar to the occasion when Abraham and his nephew Lot settled on different land for similar reasons in Genesis 13.

Thus far in Genesis, a family history has been traced for 2000 years. We have learned a lot about the believing side and, in Genesis 36, there is a report of the unbelieving side of the family.

In the genealogy of Esau, there is a careful attempt by Moses to honor his family line and show that, though he was not the son of the promise, he had been blessed by God, even though it seems unlikely that he is a believer. Throughout the genealogy of Esau, we are repeatedly told he was the father of the Edomites, a nation that warred against Israel throughout history, just as the boys had wrestled in their mother's womb. One side of the family was blessed and a blessing to others, the other side of the family was cursed and a cursing to others.

With the conclusion of Genesis 36, Moses has now provided a complete, though selective, account of the lives of Isaac and his sons Esau and Jacob/Israel. Moses is then prepared to focus on the 12 sons of Jacob, as they are the line of covenant promise, and does so by paying particular attention to his second to youngest son, Joseph. In this way, the remainder of Genesis is, in effect, still focused on Jacob through the life of his son Joseph, who take center stage for the rest of Genesis.

Dig Deeper:

- Note each time in the genealogy of Genesis 36 that we are told that Esau was the father of the Edomites.
- The struggle between Jacob and Esau that began in the womb of their mother Rebekah continued long after their death between the nations that proceeded from them. Read the short Bible book of Obadiah to see the severity of this conflict between the nations.

Talk it Out. Walk it Out.

- What changes has God patiently wrought in Jacob's character as he was slow to grow spiritually? How is this encouraging to you personally?
- What has God's dealings with Jacob revealed to us about His faithfulness to his promises and His people? How has God likewise been faithful to you?
- What evidence is there of repentance and faith in Jacob and his family in this account?

NOTES

IN THE BEGINNING

CHAPTER 3

Genesis Quiz Questions for Kids

The first time I taught through Genesis, I was in my mid-thirties, and our children were young. As I was preaching through Genesis, for fun, I started asking questions of the kids about Genesis. This was always done in a fun way – like when the boys were having a conflict, I'd ask them to name the worst brother in Genesis – or when we were having dinner, I would ask them to name some times in Genesis when people got into trouble for what they ate. The kids would come up with their own questions, and it was a bit like an occasional game show their nerd dad would host for the kids who, thankfully, have all grown up to enjoy learning the Bible and theology. The following are some of the questions I found in an old journal I kept on our dining table, and they serve as possible examples for parents who might want to try something similar to help their children learn Genesis.

Q: How many gods are there?

A: There is only One God.

Q: What does it mean that God is eternal?

A: It means that God lives forever without beginning or end.

Q: How many books are in the Bible?

A: 66

Q: How many books are in the Old Testament?

A: 39

Q: How many books are in the New Testament?

A: 27

Q: What are the first five books of the Old Testament?

A: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Q: Who wrote the first five books of the Old Testament?

A: Moses

Q: Name five things you know about Moses?

A: e.g. God spoke to him in a burning bush, his mommy floated him down a river when he was a baby, he grew up in Egypt, his brother was Aaron, God gave him the 10 Commandments, he wrote five books of the Bible, etc.

Q: What is the first book of the Bible?

A: Genesis

Q: What is the first verse of Genesis?

A: Genesis 1:1 – In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

Q: How many chapters are there in Genesis?

A: 50

Q: How did God make everything?

A: By His powerful Word from nothing.

Q: Did people evolve from monkeys or were we made by God?

A: We were made by God.

Q: Why did God make us?

A: To be His kids and have a relationship with Him.

Q: What parts of creation are you most thankful God made?

A: e.g. trees to climb in, animals to have as pets, sun to play outside, dirt to dig in, flowers to smell, etc.

Q: How many days did God work in Creation and how many days did God rest?

A. God worked 6 days and rested 1 day.

Q: What are some jobs people worked in Genesis?

A: e.g. farmers, ranchers, kings, moms, dads, boat builders, hunters, carpenters, etc.

Q: What does it mean that God blesses us?

A: It means He gives us what we need (e.g. food), He gives us friends, He gives us children, and He helps us.

Q: What is one of the greatest blessings in all the world that God gives?

A: Children like me.

Q: Who was the first man God made?

A: Adam

Q: Who was the first woman God made?

A: Eve

Q: Who invented marriage?

A: God did for 1 man and 1 woman.

Q: Where did Adam and Eve live?

A: The Garden in Eden, which was beautiful and made for them by God.

Q: What were Adam and Eve told not to do?

A: Eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Q: Who told Adam and Eve to disobey God and sin?

A: Satan

Q: Who is Satan?

A: He's a bad angel that was kicked out of Heaven because he did not love God.

Q: Did Adam and Eve obey Satan or God?

A: Satan

Q: What happened to Adam and Eve because of their sin?

A: They had to leave the beautiful garden, Adam had to work really hard to take care of his family, Eve had great pain in birthing babies.

Q: Why are there so many problems in the world?

A: We sinned against God.

Q: Who later died to forgive Adam and Eve's sin?

A: Jesus Christ

Q: Who were the first children born?

A: Cain and Abel

Q: What did Cain do to Abel?

A: Cain got mad at his brother Abel and attacked him until he died.

Q: Which man lived the longest ever and how long did he live?

A: Methuselah died when he was 969 years old.

Q: What did God tell Noah to do?

A: He built a large Ark, which is a boat.

Q: Why did Noah need to build an Ark?

A: Because God was going to send a huge flood to kill all the bad guys who were sinning.

Q: What did Noah bring on the Ark with him?

A: His family and the animals God brought him.

Q: How many days was Noah in the Ark while it rained and flooded?

A: 40 days

Q: After the flood ended and Noah left the ark to go back onto ground, what was the first thing Noah did?

A: He worshiped God and asked Him to forgive his sins.

Q: What did God put in the sky to promise Noah that there would never be a big flood again?

A: A rainbow

Q: What did God promise Abraham?

A: That he would have a baby boy and that, someday, Jesus would be born through his family to bless people all over the earth.

Q: What was Abraham's wife's name?

A: Sarah

Q: How old was Abraham when he had his first son, Isaac?

A: About 100 years old

Q: What does Isaac's name mean?

A: Laughter

Q: What did God do the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah?

A: He destroyed them because they would not stop sinning.

Q: Who was Isaac's wife?

A: Rebekah

Q: Who were Isaac's twin boys?

A: Jacob and Esau

Q: What did Esau look like when he was born?

A: He was covered in red hair like Elmo.

Q: Who did Jacob marry?

A: Leah and Rachel

Q: Are men supposed to have two wives or just one?

A: Just one

Q: What did the non-Christian men from the town of Shechem do to Jacob's daughter Dinah?

A: They treated her badly and really hurt her.

Q: What did Dinah's brothers do to the bad men who hurt their sister?

A: The brothers killed all the bad men who hurt their sister.

Q: Who did Jacob wrestle with and why?

A: Jacob wrestled with God (probably Jesus) because he wanted a blessing.

Q: Which of Jacob's sons had a dream that he ruled over his big brothers?

A: Joseph

Q: What are some places where angels appeared in Genesis?

A: e.g. at the Garden of Eden, Abraham's house, Lot's house, Jacob's Ladder

Q: How did Joseph's brothers sin against him?

A: They sold him in slavery and told his dad Jacob he was dead, which was a lie.

Q: What country was Joseph taken to away from his family?

A: Egypt

Q: Who did Joseph work for in Egypt?

A: The non-Christian king Pharaoh

Q: Why was Joseph thrown in jail?

A: A woman told a terrible lie about him.

Q: What supernatural power does God give Joseph?

A: He could interpret people's dreams to tell them what God is saying in their dreams.

Q: What dream does Joseph interpret for Pharaoh?

A: Joseph told Pharaoh to save food because, for seven years, there would not be any and, if he didn't, people would starve.

Q: Did the dream come true?

A: Yes and, because of Joseph, many people had food and did not starve to death.

Q: Who came to Joseph looking for food?

A: His mean brothers who sold him into slavery and had not seen him in many years.

Q: What did Joseph do to his brothers?

A: Joseph loved them and forgave them for sinning against him.

Q: Did Joseph get to be reunited with his daddy after being away many years?

A: Yes

MARK DRISCOLL & REALFAITH

With Pastor Mark, it's all about Jesus! He is a spiritual leader, prolific author, and compelling speaker, but at his core, he is a family man. Mark and his wife Grace have been married and doing vocational ministry together since 1993 and, along with their five kids, planted Trinity Church in Scottsdale, Arizona as a family ministry.

Pastor Mark, Grace, and their oldest daughter, Ashley, also started RealFaith Ministries, which contains a mountain of Bible teaching for men, women, couples, parents, pastors, leaders, Spanish speakers, and more, which you can access by visiting **RealFaith.com** or downloading the **RealFaith app**.

With a master's degree in exegetical theology from Western Seminary in Portland, Oregon, he has spent the better part of his life teaching verse-by-verse through books of the Bible, contextualizing its timeless truths and never shying away from challenging, convicting passages that speak to the heart of current cultural dilemmas.



Together, Mark and Grace have co-authored *Win Your War* and *Real Marriage*, and he co-authored a father-daughter project called *Pray Like Jesus* with his daughter, Ashley. Pastor Mark has also written numerous other books including *Spirit-Filled Jesus*, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, *Vintage Jesus*, and *Doctrine*.

If you have any prayer requests for us, questions for future Ask Pastor Mark or Dear Grace videos, or a testimony regarding how God has used this and other resources to help you learn God's Word, we would love to hear from you at **hello@realfaith.com**.

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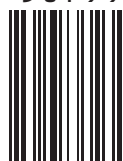
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