

## INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

The book of Genesis is the first book in the Bible. It is the foundation for both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word "Genesis" is a Greek word which means "beginning." The book of Genesis tells of the beginnings of many things, including God's plan for the redemption of man and the beginning of God's chosen nation—Israel—through which the promised Savior would come.

**"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"** (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, the book of Genesis is designed by God to help you learn many truths that He wants to reveal to you. God's Word will lead you in right ways and will teach you how to be right with Him. God wants to equip you to be a mighty man or woman of God. As you ask God's Holy Spirit to teach you, you may see things in your life which are not pleasing to Him. **"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). Put into practice what you learn, with God's help. He says, **"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand"** (Isaiah 41:10).

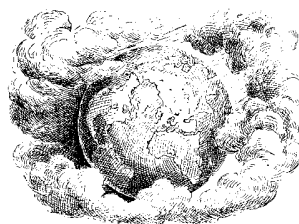
God inspired the book of Genesis to be written by Moses. Jesus said, **"Moses...wrote about Me"** (John 5:46). The Scriptures, Jesus said, **"...testify of Me"** (John 5:39). My prayer is that this study of the book of Genesis will delight your heart as you see how Jesus is revealed in Genesis. May you meet Him in its pages. You may want to use Psalm 119:18 as a prayer to begin each time of study: **"Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law."**

—V. R. Benson

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## STORY 1. GOD CREATES THE WORLD



Genesis 1:1-28, 31

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. <sup>4</sup>And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. <sup>5</sup>God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

<sup>6</sup>Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." <sup>7</sup>Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the

waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. <sup>8</sup>And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.

<sup>9</sup>Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. <sup>10</sup>And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that it was good. <sup>11</sup>Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. <sup>12</sup>And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>So the evening and the morning were the third day.

<sup>14</sup>Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; <sup>15</sup>and let them be for lights in the firmament of the

heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. <sup>16</sup>Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also. <sup>17</sup>God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth, <sup>18</sup>and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens." <sup>21</sup>So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." <sup>23</sup>So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its

kind"; and it was so. <sup>25</sup>And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>26</sup>Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup>So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup>Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." <sup>31</sup>Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

#### Genesis 2:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.

<sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had

2

done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

<sup>3</sup>Then God blessed the seventh

day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

### Something to Do

A. Write or print your answer to each question. If you cannot answer the question, read the Bible story again. The number after each question refers to the verse number in the Bible story where the answer is found. Check your answers by referring to the list of answers inside the back cover.

1. On the **first day of creation** the Spirit of God was \_\_\_\_\_ over the face of the waters (chapter 1, verse 2). God said, "Let there be \_\_\_\_\_" (3). He also divided the \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_. (4).

2. On the **second day of creation** God made the \_\_\_\_\_ and divided the \_\_\_\_\_ which were under it from the \_\_\_\_\_ which were above it (7).

[The firmament is the "expanse"—the arch of the sky.]

3. On the **third day of creation** God gathered the waters under the heavens and let the \_\_\_\_\_ appear (9). He also said, "Let the earth bring forth \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ that yields seed, and the \_\_\_\_\_ that yields fruit" with seed in it (11).

4. On the **fourth day of creation** God made the two great \_\_\_\_\_: the greater light to rule the \_\_\_\_\_, and the lesser light to rule the \_\_\_\_\_. He made the \_\_\_\_\_ also (16). The lights would be for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. (14).

3

5. On the **fifth day of creation** God created great \_\_\_\_\_ and every \_\_\_\_\_ that moves in water (21). He also made \_\_\_\_\_ to fly above the earth in the open sky (20).

6. On the **sixth day of creation** God made the \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth according to its kind, \_\_\_\_\_ according to its kind, and everything that \_\_\_\_\_ on the earth according to its kind (25). God also created \_\_\_\_\_ in the image of \_\_\_\_\_ (27). When God saw everything that He had made, He thought it was very \_\_\_\_\_ (31).

7. On the **seventh day** God \_\_\_\_\_ His work and \_\_\_\_\_ from all His work (2:2).

B. Write out **Genesis 1:1** and memorize it. Also memorize what God did on each day of creation.

### Something to Think About

The Bible clearly teaches that there is a God who is vitally involved in the affairs of this world. The miracles of nature around us, seen every day, prove it. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). God's power and being are clearly seen through creation. It is only when people do not glorify Him as God, when they are not thankful to Him, when they do not worship Him, but want to continue in their wickedness, that their hearts are darkened and they become foolish (Romans 1:19-25). "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Psalm 14:1a).

The Bible does not conflict with any true, proven facts about science. Some "scientific" theories, such as evolution, conflict with the Bible. God's Word is truth, and all truth will agree with His Word.

4

### Jesus Was Present at Creation

"The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4b). Yet in that one Godhead, we see a mystery. "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image'" (Genesis 1:26a). The one God speaks of Himself as plural. That is because our heavenly Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus are One. "For in Him [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

One name for Jesus is "the Word." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 3, 14). How wonderful it is that God became man in the person of Jesus so that He might bring us back to Himself and give us eternal life!

### God Does What He Says

Did you notice that when God said, "Let there be light," there was light? When He said, "Let there be a firmament," He made a firmament. Everything that God says He will do, He does. When that great warrior, Joshua, was about to die, he told the people, "You know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you, and not one word of them has failed" (Joshua 23:14b). "The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, 'Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand'" (Isaiah 14:24). How wonderful that we can depend on the promises of God! How seriously, also, we should take His warnings! *He will do what He says.*

Are there some promises of God that you need to trust

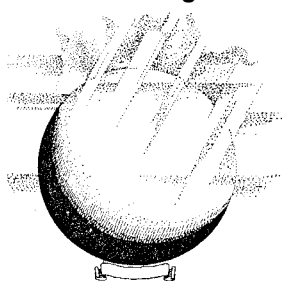
5

God to bring to pass in *your* life? You can depend on Him to do *everything* He has promised when His conditions are met.

### Spiritual Teachings From the Creation Record

We can learn much about God and His ways from the Bible. From the story of God's creation of the *physical* universe we can learn much about God's dealings in the *spiritual* realm. *Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand* and experience these concepts. He *will* do so as you patiently study His Word and obey the things that you *do* understand. Throughout your study of Genesis, come back to Lesson 1 again and again. You will see new insights into what God wants to be to you and what He wants you to be. You have a great inheritance available from God. He wants you to possess it in greater and greater measure. **"Do not fear or be discouraged"** (Deuteronomy 1:21b).

### The First Day of Creation— A Picture of Light Shining in Darkness



What an awesome scene! The Holy Spirit of God hovering, brooding over the darkness, emptiness, restlessness, until God brings light! **"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 'There is no peace,' says my God, 'for the wicked'"** (Isaiah 57:20-21). Do you feel you are

walking in the dark, that you are troubled and empty? There is hope! **"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the**

6

**light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"** (2 Corinthians 4:6).

God knew also how *spiritually* dark the world was—how much the world needed a Savior to be its light. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary and she conceived the Son of God. **"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name"** (John 1:4, 12).

Have you received Jesus—His light and His life—so that you can be a new creation in Christ? **"The wind blows where it wishes.... So is everyone who is born of the Spirit"** (John 3:8). **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new"** (2 Corinthians 5:17). Have you been born of His Spirit by receiving Jesus into your heart?

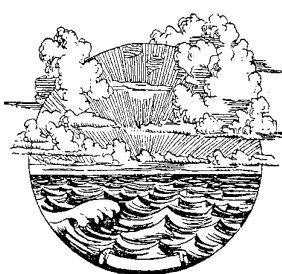
On the first day of the world's creation, God separated the light from the darkness. In the same way, when He makes us new creations in Christ, God wants there to be a separation of light from darkness in our lives. Jesus was **"holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"** (Hebrews 7:26). He **"loved righteousness and hated lawlessness"** (Hebrews 1:9). We, too, are to **"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them"** (Ephesians 5:11). **"Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light"** (Romans 13:12b). God's Word and His Spirit within us can show us what is right and what is wrong. Are you walking in the light—with no unconfessed sin—even as He is in the light? **"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"** (1 John 1:7).

When the light of Jesus is in our lives, we can be **"blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the**

7

**midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world"** (Philippians 2:15b). Jesus says, **"You are the light of the world"** (Matthew 5:14a). It is only **"when the Holy Spirit has come upon you"** that you receive power and can be a witness for Jesus, beginning where you are and even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Are you a light to your world?

### The Second Day of Creation— A Picture of the Cross of Christ



On the second day of creation, God made the firmament (sky) by separating the waters which were under the sky from the waters which were above the sky. In a similar way, on the cross, Jesus was separated from God (above) and from man (beneath). **"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"** (Matthew 27:46b).

He was **"cut off from the land of the living"** (Isaiah 53:8). It was not enough for Jesus to be born as the light of the world. He also had to die for the sins of the world.

Just as God *purposed* to make the sky *before* He actually made it, so God planned beforehand for Jesus to die on the cross. Jesus was **"delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God"** (Acts 2:23). **"It pleased the LORD to bruise Him"** (Isaiah 53:10). Christ was **"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"** (Revelation 13:8b).

As the sky *divided* the waters, so the cross of Christ divides mankind. **"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being**

8

**saved it is the power of God"** (1 Corinthians 1:18).

How can this second day's work of creation speak to us? The work of the cross must apply to our lives. **"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"** (Galatians 2:20a). Sin in our lives must be dealt with by bringing it to the cross. If we are in Christ, we have been crucified with Him. We are dead to sin. **"For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live"** (Romans 8:13). Confessing our sin to God brings cleansing, because sin has already been judged on the cross.

**"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me"** (Luke 9:23b). This call to full commitment to God's will separates those who are true followers of Jesus from those who merely profess to follow Him. True followers are **"caught in the middle"**—loved by God and their brothers in Christ, but hated by the world who hates Christ. Are you living as one who has been crucified with Christ?

### The Third Day of Creation— A Picture of Resurrection Life



On the third day of creation dry land appeared, bringing forth living plants. Jesus once likened Himself to the seed of a living plant. **"Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain"** (John 12:24b). Jesus was saying that He had to die so that He could bring new life to many. Death had

9



to come before life. However, a dead Savior could not save anybody, so on the *third* day He rose again, “according to the Scriptures”—all in God’s plan (1 Corinthians 15:4).

Jesus is *alive*! He says, “**Because I live, you will live also**” (John 14:19b). Not only will we live again in that last day (our bodies will be resurrected), but we are to live *now* in newness of life—as those who are dead to sin, but “**alive to God**” (Romans 6:11). He is able “**to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them**” (Hebrews 7:25b).

To follow Jesus, we need to follow Him in death—death to our sinful nature, which was accomplished by Jesus on the cross—so that we might live new, powerful lives of righteousness as we follow Him in resurrection. We do not *have* to live in our old ways; we can be raised up with Christ to a new life. (Study Romans chapter 6). We need to *daily* reckon on this to be so. Are there some areas in your life where God wants you to put away the old ways and, through His Spirit, put on some new ways of acting and thinking?

#### The Fourth Day of Creation— A Picture of Living Above the World



To complete our redemption, Jesus not only had to be raised from the dead, but He also needed to enter “**into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us**” (Hebrews 9:24b). On the fourth day of creation, our attention is turned to the heavens, to the creation of “**two great lights.**” We are reminded of Christ—“**The Sun of Righteous-**

10

**ness**” (Malachi 4:2)—and of God’s people, who reflect His light and give light in the darkness just as the moon reflects the light of the sun to give light at night. Just as the moon was created to “**rule the night**” (Genesis 1:16), God’s people are to have power over sin and authority over Satan. But we can have this authority only as we live “**in the heavenly places in Christ**” (Ephesians 1:3b). The Spirit says, “**If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth**” (Colossians 3:1-2).

When the earth comes between the moon and the sun, the light from the moon is eclipsed, or blocked out. In the same way, if we allow the world to come between us and Jesus, our light to the world will be eclipsed (or blocked out); we will have no victory and no witness. “**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him**” (1 John 2:15). “**Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God**” (James 4:4b). This does not mean we should not love the *people* of the world. It means that we should not love the *ways* or the *thinking* of the world that is against God’s ways and thoughts. Are you living “in the heavenly places”—living consciously in God’s presence moment by moment?

#### The Fifth and Sixth Days of Creation— A Picture of Fruitfulness and Authority

We see that all of nature is to be fruitful and to multiply according to its kind. To man is given the added command to subdue the earth and to have dominion over every living thing. We will see in Lesson 3 that man utterly failed in this

11



mission. Man could now reproduce only after his own kind—men like himself, falling far short of the glory of God and in bondage to Satan. Yet, praise God! “**For what the law could not do... , God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the**

**law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit**” (Romans 8:3b-4). We, too, can be sons of God through Christ and be conformed to the image of His Son, bearing the fruits of righteousness: “**For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God**” (Romans 8:14).

“**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**” (Galatians 5:22-23a). “**Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God**” (Philippians 1:11). Jesus says, “**I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing**” (John 15:5).

Because Jesus was victorious over death, He could say, “**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age**” (Matthew 28:18-20). We have been given authority to do Christ’s work in this world. Satan is a de-

12

feated foe. Jesus says, “**Behold, I give you authority... over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you**” (Luke 10:19). “**You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world**” (1 John 4:4). Are you living the fruitful and victorious life of a child of God?



#### The Seventh Day of Creation— A Picture of Rest

God’s work of creation by His word was complete, and so God rested. No rest can come until God’s will has been done.

There is also a rest for the people of God. Jesus said, “**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls**” (Matthew 11:28-29).

Jesus came to do God’s will. “**By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified**” (Hebrews 10:10, 14). Just as God *finished* His work of creation, Christ *finished* His work of redemption and is now seated at the right hand of God. By faith in Christ’s *finished* work, we can enter into *spiritual rest*, knowing that we are forgiven and have peace with God. Our works can add nothing to what Christ has done. “**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us**” (Titus 3:5a). “**There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For**

13

he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:9-10). As we receive Christ's finished work for us, we will have rest.

Some do not enter that place of rest in Christ because there is still a struggle in themselves between the old nature and the new creation in Christ. There need be no struggle. We are not in bondage to the old nature anymore. It was crucified with Christ. We are free; we are new. We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit if the Spirit of God lives in us (Romans 8:9). As we allow God to do His work in us, we will have rest.

God sanctified the seventh day. This means that He set it apart for His special use. One of the Ten Commandments shows us that God also wants His people to complete their work in six days and to set apart a day for rest and spiritual blessing. "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 58:13-14).

As we "rest" from our own works in our life on earth by doing everything in God's strength and by His direction, God can use us in special ways that have eternal value. Then when we enter into heaven at the end of our life, we can fully "rest" from our labors. "Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." ' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them' " (Revelation 14:13).

## STORY 2. GOD PROVIDES FOR MAN

Genesis 2:7-9, 15-18, 21-25

<sup>7</sup>And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. <sup>8</sup>The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.



<sup>9</sup>And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>15</sup>Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. <sup>16</sup>And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup>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."

<sup>18</sup>And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper

comparable to him."

<sup>21</sup>And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. <sup>22</sup>Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup>And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." <sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

<sup>25</sup>And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

### Something to Do

Fill in the blank spaces with the correct missing word.

1. God provided a place for Adam to live. He planted a \_\_\_\_\_ eastward in \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 8).

2. God provided work for Adam to do. God put Adam in the garden of Eden to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ it (15).
3. God provided instructions on how to avoid death. God commanded the man, saying that of \_\_\_\_\_ tree in the garden he might \_\_\_\_\_ eat, but that he was not to eat of the tree of the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. If he ate of that tree, he would surely \_\_\_\_\_ (16-17).
4. God provided a wife for Adam. God took one of Adam's \_\_\_\_\_ (21) and made a \_\_\_\_\_ (22) and brought her to the man.

### God Provides for Us

How God must have loved man, to provide everything that he needed! God knows what we need to be fruitful. "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). God wants us to trust Him, to have fellowship with Him, to delight in Him, to reign with Him. He has given us commands for our own good. "And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive" (Deuteronomy 6:24a). What a wonderful God we have!

### God's Plan for Every Marriage

Marriage was God's idea, and what a beautiful plan He had in mind! How grieved God must be when marriages of His people fall short of His perfect plan! His plan is given here in Genesis:

1. A man shall leave his father and mother. Though we should always honor and respect our parents, there comes a time when a man becomes the head of his own home. Then he is free to love his wife fully. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave

Himself for it. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it" (Ephesians 5:25, 28-29a).

2. A man shall cleave to his wife. A man should stick to his wife, like glue, for life. Jesus confirmed this plan for marriage and added, "What God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6b). Why do people want divorces? Jesus said there is only one real cause. It is "because of the hardness of your hearts" (Matthew 19:8). But that is not God's plan. God says "that He hates divorce" (Malachi 2:16). Instead of putting away our spouse, God wants us to put away all bitterness and wrath. "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

3. A man and his wife shall be one flesh. The physical union of bodies should be a beautiful expression of the unity of minds, hearts, and spirits. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

4. They were naked and were not ashamed. Before sin came into the world, this first couple were open with each other and with God. They had nothing to hide. When Adam and Eve sinned, for the first time they realized their nakedness (see Story 3). God Himself then made clothes for them, involving the first shedding of animal blood.

Only as couples are made new creatures in Christ, by Christ's blood sacrifice, can they experience true openness again between them. Confession of wrongs and of needs can be shared with God and with each other. "I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men" (Acts 24:16b). "Let love be without hypocrisy" (Romans 12:9a). Genuine love makes married partners tolerant of many things that would otherwise irritate.

### STORY 3. MAN BECOMES SEPARATED FROM GOD



Genesis 3:1-21, 24

<sup>1</sup>Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" <sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; <sup>3</sup>but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" <sup>4</sup>And the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup>For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise,

she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

<sup>8</sup>And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup>Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup>So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." <sup>11</sup>And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" <sup>12</sup>Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." <sup>13</sup>And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

18

<sup>14</sup>So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

<sup>16</sup>To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

<sup>17</sup>Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': 'Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. <sup>18</sup>Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. <sup>19</sup>In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the

ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

<sup>20</sup>And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. <sup>21</sup>Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

<sup>24</sup>So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.



#### Satan Is a Deceiver

Satan, once a beautiful angel of God, had rebelled against God and was thrown out of heaven. We know it was he that

19

appeared to Eve. **"That serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth..."** (Revelation 12:9b).

How does Satan try to deceive? We see that he first quoted God's words to Eve, but he quoted them wrong. How important it is to know God's Word well! God had said they *could* eat out of every tree in the garden, except one. Satan tried to make God's command sound hard and unreasonable. He sowed the seed of discontent toward God and toward God's provision.

Satan's next step was to claim that God's word was not true. He said Eve *could* sin and get away with it! He tried to take away her fear of God—the foundation of wisdom.

Next, Satan slandered God's character. He accused God of deliberately withholding good from her. Then he claimed that she would be like God if she would disobey God. The final seeds of distrusting God were sown in her heart! If she had really loved and trusted God, she would have obeyed Him. Oh, that men might know the *goodness* of God! **"The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD"** (Psalm 33:5b). **"His commandments are not burdensome"** (1 John 5:3b). **"You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God"** (Matthew 22:29b). **"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them"** (Ephesians 5:6-7).

#### The Consequences of Sin

Was God's warning true? Did Adam die the very day that he sinned? Yes, instantly he died *spiritually*; that is, he was separated from God and could not live forever with God. That is why all people born after Adam are born spiritually dead, separated from God, and need to be *born again* spiritually in order to live forever with God as God planned.

20

But also *physically*, Adam's body started to die. **"With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"** (2 Peter 3:8b). No man has lived a thousand years. Adam lived to be 930 years old. In God's sight, he died physically in the day that he sinned.

**"For the wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:23a). Yes, Adam's and Eve's eyes were opened as Satan had promised, but not to all the good things which God had in mind for them. They knew they were naked. *The glory of God had departed*. All future generations would be born as they were. **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"** (Romans 3:23).

Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves. They hid themselves from the presence of God. Oh, the tragedy of it! And all of creation suffered the curse of God as a result of their sin. Let us see sin in our lives as something *serious*. It separates us from God. It affects future generations. It touches everything around us. Just one "little" sin does all that! That is because *all* sin is really big. **"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all"** (James 2:10).

Let us deal swiftly with sin in our lives. **"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy"** (Proverbs 28:13).

#### The Promise of Redemption

Genesis 3:15 is the first hint in the Bible that a Savior would come through the seed (offspring) of the woman and that Satan's defeat through Him would be sure. **"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"** (Galatians 4:4-5). **"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the**

21



**works of the devil**" (1 John 3:8b). Aren't you glad God provided a way back to fellowship with Him?

Adam and Eve tried to cover their nakedness by sewing aprons of fig leaves. But man can do nothing to make himself acceptable to God. "...**All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags**" (Isaiah 64:6a). But God loves man so much! He Himself made coats of skins and covered them. To have skins, animals had to be killed. This was the first shedding of blood. "**For the life of the flesh is in the blood ... for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul**" (Leviticus 17:11). The word "atonement" means "covering." This act of God was to symbolize that blood would need to be shed—not the blood of animals, but the blood of Jesus Christ. Only Jesus, the Lamb provided by God, could obtain eternal redemption for us. Praise God!

Christ came to be what Adam was not. "**For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous**" (Romans 5:19).

"**For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive**" (1 Corinthians 15:22). "**And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit**" (1 Corinthians 15:45). "**And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins**" (Ephesians 2:1).

As we obey God's Word and submit to Him in the circumstances He allows, our minds are renewed and we are transformed. As we spend time in His presence, He makes us more and more like Christ, who is in the perfect image of God (Hebrews 1:3).

"**But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord**" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

22

**the desires of your heart**" (Psalm 37:4). The pleasures of sin last such a short time and then lead to death.

Jesus, who was without sin, was tempted by Satan also (Matthew 4:1-11). While Eve was tempted in a garden, surrounded by all she needed, Jesus was tempted in a wilderness after 40 days of fasting. Satan also came to Jesus quoting Scripture. He appealed to Jesus' need for food. He promised Jesus the kingdoms of the world. He tempted Jesus to prove to the world who He really was. Now, for Jesus to eat when He was hungry, to rule the kingdoms of the world, and to show the world who He really was were all good things. Jesus had a right to them. It was God's purpose to do this for Jesus in the future. But to receive them from Satan in Satan's way? NEVER! Jesus is our example in resisting Satan. He was totally submitted to His Father's will. He spoke directly to Satan and told him to go away. With each temptation, Jesus said, "**It is written...**" and He quoted the Word of God. And Satan left Him for a time.

We, too, can resist Satan in the way Jesus did, and Satan will flee. For example, when we realize that Satan is tempting us to complain, we can say, "Satan, in the name of Jesus, go away, for it is written, '**Do all things without murmuring and disputing**'" (Philippians 2:14). It is so important to know God's Word well. The Word of God is a spiritual weapon; it is called the "**sword of the Spirit**" (Ephesians 6:17). Satan, a liar from the beginning, *has* to flee when faced with truth. As you study through this book, write out a list of verses to memorize. Then spend some time each day memorizing them and reviewing them aloud to yourself in order to fix them firmly in your mind and heart. If you are often tempted in an area of life, memorize a verse which you can use to resist Satan when that temptation comes. "**Be holy, for I am holy**" (1 Peter 1:16b).

We have no strength in ourselves to cause Satan to flee,

24

## How to Resist the Devil

Just as Satan deceived Eve and through Eve tempted Adam to sin, he will try to deceive and tempt you, too. "**Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith**" (1 Peter 5:8-9a). But Satan does not always appear as a roaring lion or as a serpent. He can also appear as "**an angel of light**" (2 Corinthians 11:14). If any seemingly good person or even an angel should tell you something that is not true according to the Bible, do not believe him (Galatians 1:8).

"**Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you**" (James 4:7). God tells us to resist Satan. How can we do that? Before we can resist Satan, we must submit ourselves to God. We must be committed to doing God's will. God does not tempt people to do evil. "**But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren**" (James 1:14-16). If we are not fully committed to doing God's will, Satan will be able to entice us to do the desires of our flesh. "**For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever**" (1 John 2:16-17). Satan enticed Eve through her desire for good food, her desire for what looked good to her eyes, her desire to be somebody important. But if she had done the will of God instead of following the desires of her flesh, *she could have lived forever*. She would also have received the true desires of her heart. "**Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you**

23

but at the name of Jesus, whose blood defeated Satan at Calvary, Satan *is compelled* to flee (Revelation 12:11).

"**No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it**" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

## STORY 4. THE FIRST MURDER



Genesis 4:1-12, 16a, 25-26

<sup>1</sup>Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have gotten a man from the LORD." <sup>2</sup>Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. <sup>3</sup>And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. <sup>4</sup>Abel also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his

offering, <sup>5</sup>but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. <sup>6</sup>So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? <sup>7</sup>If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." <sup>8</sup>Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose against Abel his brother and killed him.

<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" <sup>10</sup>And He said, "What have you done?" The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. <sup>11</sup>So now you are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your

25

brother's blood from your hand.  
<sup>12</sup>When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."<sup>10</sup> Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD ....<sup>25</sup> And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore

a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed."<sup>26</sup> And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD.

### Suffering Because of Righteousness

"By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (Hebrews 11:4a). Why was Abel's sacrifice accepted? Abel brought a lamb, the first and best of his flock. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin]" (Hebrews 9:22b). Cain brought the offering he himself chose; it was not the first and best, and it was not what God had said. His sins were not covered, because no blood was shed.

"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you" (1 John 3:10-13).

Jesus told us that the blood of righteous Abel was the first righteous blood to be shed on the earth (Matthew 23:35). Jesus taught His followers to expect persecution. The world hated Jesus and put Him to death. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore

26

the world hates you. ... A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:19-20). "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12).

### Redemption Through the Blood of Jesus

Before Christ came into the world, the offering of a lamb was symbolic of what would come. Jesus was "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29b). He was the Perfect Lamb provided by God so that by the shedding of blood, our sins could be forgiven once and for all. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). "... You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Now the symbolic blood sacrifices of Old Testament times are no longer needed.

### We Must Deal with Anger

God is not willing that any should perish. He is so patient toward us. In the story of Cain and Abel, isn't it wonderful that God first asked Cain why he was angry? God kindly told Cain that he would be accepted if he did what was right. God also helped him to understand that if he didn't do what was right, it was because sin was at his door, wanting to control him. God then urged Cain to rule over sin. How sad it is that Cain did not take God's advice! Cain let anger and hate control him. He chose to be judged by God rather than to be accepted by God. He went out of God's presence rather than conquer his anger.

27

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:21-22a). "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:14-15). How can we be filled with love for others, as God commands? "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5b). "But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him" (1 John 2:5). "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).

God tells us how to deal with anger in Ephesians 4:23-32:

1. "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (4:23). We must be born of God's Spirit so that we have a new spirit that is able to walk in new ways. We must fill our minds with God's Word so that we know His ways.

2. "Put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness" (4:24). We must walk as new creatures in Christ. It is a walk of faith, yielding ourselves to be filled with the Spirit continuously.

3. "Each one speak truth with his neighbor" (4:25). Sometimes the anger we feel is because of some wrong that should be made right. In that case, we should not keep silent. "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long" (Psalm 32:3). We should speak the truth lovingly, then leave the matter in God's hands. We should not burden our spirits and make our bodies sick.

28

4. "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil" (4:26-27). We can be angry and yet not sin. Anger can be good, because it tells us that something is wrong that must be set right. We should make things right with God or with people that very day. If we do not, we give the devil a chance to cause us to sin. We must resist the devil and not allow him to have any foothold in our lives.

5. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (4:29-30a). If we speak harsh, angry words, we will make ourselves and everyone around us angrier. "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). How grieved God is when He hears harsh words! How He longs for us to be gracious and kind!

6. "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice" (4:31). We can be cleansed from these things by confessing them to God. We can change our attitudes toward others by praying for them and by realizing that God has permitted every circumstance that touches our lives. God is in control and will bring good from it. So we need not place blame on people.

7. "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you" (4:32). What a change can come when we decide to do some unexpected kindness! We can see the other person compassionately, realizing his many needs and problems. When we realize how much God has forgiven us, we are humbled and God can give us grace to forgive (1 Peter 5:5). "When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7).

29



## STORY 5. A GODLY FAMILY

Genesis 5:21-29

<sup>21</sup>Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. <sup>22</sup>After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. <sup>23</sup>So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. <sup>24</sup>And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. <sup>25</sup>Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and begot Lamech. <sup>26</sup>After he begot Lamech,

Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years, and had sons and daughters. <sup>27</sup>So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died.

<sup>28</sup>Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and begot a son. <sup>29</sup>And he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed."

### Walking with God

"By faith Enoch was translated (taken from this earth) so that he did not see death, 'and was not found because God had translated him'; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:5-6).

Enoch pleased God. What a wonderful testimony! He did not please God because of his wisdom, strength, or the things that he did. He pleased God because he had faith. He walked with God and believed that God was good.

How can we, today, walk with God? "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3). To walk with God, we need to agree with God about our sin. We need to agree with Him about our need for Him. We need to agree that His ways are best. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and

30

the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). We need to talk with God in prayer and let Him talk to us through His Word, the Bible. As we walk in step with Him, waiting upon Him, we experience His presence with us moment by moment. What a wonderful life!

God rewarded Enoch for diligently seeking Him. He shared with Enoch some of His plans for the future. Evidently God told Enoch about the Great Flood which was to come, because Enoch named his son Methuselah, which Bible scholars tells us literally means "When he dies, it shall be sent." Methuselah lived longer than any man in history—969 years. He died the same year that God sent the Flood.

God also shared with Enoch His plans for the second coming of Christ. "Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him'" (Jude 14-15). God shares His ways and His plans with those who walk with Him. "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants" (Amos 3:7a). We will not be taken by surprise. "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thessalonians 5:4). If we are alive when the Lord returns, we—like Enoch—will be taken up by God. "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Let us be ready for that day by walking with God now.

31

## STORY 6. GOD FINDS ONE RIGHTEOUS MAN



Genesis 6:5-9, 13-14, 22

<sup>5</sup>Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. <sup>6</sup>And the

LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. <sup>7</sup>So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." <sup>8</sup>But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. <sup>9</sup>...Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.

<sup>13</sup>And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. <sup>14</sup>Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.

<sup>22</sup>Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

### Something to Do

Fill in the blanks with the correct words:

1. God saw that the \_\_\_\_\_ of man was great. He saw that every \_\_\_\_\_ of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 5). The earth was filled with \_\_\_\_\_ (13).

[God sees everything. He sees both the evil and the good. He

32

hates violence. He wants us to be kind and tenderhearted. He does not want us to imagine evil things. He wants us to cast down imaginations that oppose God and to meditate on His Word day and night (2 Corinthians 10:5 and Joshua 1:8).]

2. The Lord was \_\_\_\_\_ that he had made man. He was \_\_\_\_\_ in His heart (6).

[The word in the first blank, translated from the original Hebrew language, literally means "to sigh" or "to breathe strongly." It is used here in an *unfavorable* sense. When Noah was born, however, his family named him Noah, which means "Rest." They said Noah would *comfort* them in the midst of the hard world. The Hebrew word translated "comfort" also literally means, "to sigh" or "to breathe strongly," but in a *favorable* sense. Noah must have brought relief and comfort in a wicked world.]

3. Noah found \_\_\_\_\_ in the eyes of the Lord (8). In God's sight Noah was a \_\_\_\_\_ man, \_\_\_\_\_ in his generations. Noah, like Enoch, \_\_\_\_\_ with God (9).

[**"For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him"** (2 Chronicles 16:9a).]

4. Noah did \_\_\_\_\_ that God commanded him (22).

### Judgment Is Coming

God always gives men time to turn from sin and to follow Him. When He saw the wickedness of man, He said, "**My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years**" (Genesis 6:3). God knew that He could not continue to wait for mankind to repent, so He decided that He would have to destroy the earth with a flood within 120 years. But God is just, so He provided the way for Noah and his family to escape His wrath. "**By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by**

33

which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

We know that our world is becoming more and more wicked. Jesus said, "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37-39). In Noah's day the world was destroyed by a worldwide flood. "But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness...? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Peter 3:7, 10-11, 13-14).

What shall we do, knowing that judgment is coming on the world and that the Lord is delaying His coming only that men might have longer to repent? First, we ourselves must walk with God, pleasing Him, doing *all* that He commands us to do to save ourselves and our families through His provision of salvation through Christ. We must not focus our attention on things of this life, but we must put our attention on things of the Spirit. "But seek first the kingdom of God

and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17). Then, as Noah was known as a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), so we also must warn our world about coming judgment and tell people how to be saved from God's wrath. "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11a).

## STORY 7. GOD JUDGES THE WORLD WITH A FLOOD



Genesis 7:1-7, 11-17, 22-24

"Then the LORD said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation. "You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of

animals that are unclean, a male and his female; <sup>3</sup>also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth. "For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made." <sup>5</sup>And Noah did according to all that the LORD commanded him. "Noah was six hundred years old when the flood-waters were on the earth. "So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood.

<sup>11</sup>In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the

fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. <sup>12</sup>And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights. <sup>13</sup>On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark— <sup>14</sup>they and every beast after its kind, all cattle after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort. <sup>15</sup>And they went into the ark to Noah, two by two, of all flesh in which is the breath of life. <sup>16</sup>So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in. <sup>17</sup>Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. <sup>22</sup>All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. <sup>23</sup>...Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive. <sup>24</sup>And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.

Genesis 8:1-13, 20-21

"Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the

animals that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided. <sup>2</sup>The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained. <sup>3</sup>And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased. <sup>4</sup>Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat. <sup>5</sup>And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen. <sup>6</sup>So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made. <sup>7</sup>Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth. <sup>8</sup>He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had abated from the face of the ground. <sup>9</sup>But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her

into the ark to himself. <sup>10</sup>And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark. <sup>11</sup>Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf was in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had abated from the earth. <sup>12</sup>So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore.



<sup>13</sup>And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry. <sup>20</sup>Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean

bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. <sup>21</sup>And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done."

Genesis 9:11-13

<sup>11</sup>"Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." <sup>12</sup>And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: <sup>13</sup>I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth."

## Jesus Is Our Ark of Safety

There comes a time when God shuts the door, and no more people can be saved. We know that wrath is coming upon the world again, this time by fire. But God has again provided a way of escape for those who walk with Him. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "Nor is there salvation in

any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). **"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him"** (Romans 5:8-9). **"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"** (Hebrews 2:3a). What a wonderful salvation has been provided—an ark of safety!

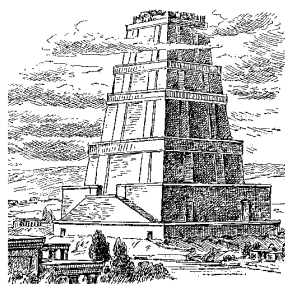
It is interesting that God told Noah to cover the ark inside and out with *pitch* (Genesis 6:14). The Hebrew word for pitch is the same word which is also translated *"atonement."* Both words mean a *"covering."* The blood of Jesus shed for us *covers* our sins. The blood of Jesus also *cleanses* us from all sin.

It is God's *purpose* that whole families be saved, just as Noah's family was saved in the ark. **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household"** (Acts 16:31b). But we must do all that God commands, just as Noah did. We must train our children, love our children, and not provoke them to wrath by our neglect. God is our heavenly Father. How does He treat you as His child? Is He patient with you? Does He *condemn* you or *encourage* you? Does He give you good things to enjoy? Is He interested in every detail about you? Does He love for you to spend time with Him? We should treat *our* children in the same way God treats *His* children.

God shows how strongly He feels about families: **"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse"** (Malachi 4:5-6). Let us take our family responsibilities seriously.

38

## STORY 8. THE TOWER OF BABEL



Genesis 11:1-9

<sup>1</sup>Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. <sup>2</sup>And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. <sup>3</sup>Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. <sup>4</sup>And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heav-

ens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

<sup>5</sup>But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. <sup>6</sup>And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. <sup>7</sup>Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." <sup>8</sup>So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. <sup>9</sup>Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

### God Puts Down Man's Pride

The great-grandson of Noah, Nimrod, became a mighty man in the earth. He was against the Lord, and part of his kingdom centered around Babel, later known as Babylon. (See Genesis 10:8-10.) In this story the people of Babel wanted to make a name for themselves. They wanted to make a tower to be used in the worship of the heavens.

39

They did not want to be scattered abroad as God had commanded. In their pride, they started their false Satanic religion apart from God. They spoke boastfully about what they would accomplish. God would not allow them to be united against Himself, so He caused them to speak in many languages. The resulting confusion stopped the project.

Jesus said, **"Without Me you can do nothing"** (John 15:5b). **"Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time"** (1 Peter 5:5b-6).

God wants *His* people to be united. On the day of Pentecost—a feast day fifty days after the Passover, when Jesus was crucified—while disciples of Jesus were gathered together *"with one accord,"* the Holy Spirit came upon them. That day the people were amazed because **"everyone heard them speak in his own language"** (Acts 2:6).

True followers of Christ will feel a unity of spirit with other believers, even if they are of different nationalities or speak different languages. We are one in Christ.

All of man's attempts to have unity apart from God will eventually come to nothing. Let us beware of trying to make a name for ourselves or of being part of any group that exalts man or practices witchcraft. **"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues'"** (Revelation 18:4).

## STORY 9. GOD CALLS ABRAM

Genesis 12:1-5, 7

<sup>1</sup>Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your kindred and from

your father's house, to a land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great;

40



and you shall be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

<sup>4</sup>So Abram departed as the

LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup>Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

### God Chooses a Man of Faith

In our study of the book of Genesis so far, God has been dealing with the whole world. Now in the remaining chapters we will see God dealing with four great men: Abraham (called Abram until God changed his name), Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. They were not perfect men, but they were men who loved God—men whom God could use. As you study their lives, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you what He wants you to learn from their example. **"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition"** (1 Corinthians 10:11a).

**"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going"** (Hebrews 11:8). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). But the evidence of faith is obedience.

41



**"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"** (James 2:26). Can people see that your faith is real because of your obedience to God's Word?

### God Has Chosen Us

Jesus said, **"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you"** (John 15:16). **"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you"** (John 20:21b). You may feel weak and foolish, but God has chosen to save you. **"Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?"** (James 2:5). Just as God promised Abram an inheritance, He makes you an heir of His kingdom. Abram left everything to follow God and to do what He said. What has God called *you* to do? Where does He call *you* to go for Him? **"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier"** (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

### Something to Do

God made seven promises to Abraham. What are they?

1. I will make you a great \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 2).
2. I will \_\_\_\_\_ you (2).
3. I will make your \_\_\_\_\_ great (2).
4. You shall be a \_\_\_\_\_ (2).
5. I will \_\_\_\_\_ those who \_\_\_\_\_ you (3).
6. I will \_\_\_\_\_ him who \_\_\_\_\_ you (3).
7. In you all the \_\_\_\_\_ of the earth shall be \_\_\_\_\_ (3).

42

## STORY 10. ABRAM GOES TO EGYPT



Genesis 12:10-20

<sup>10</sup>Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land. <sup>11</sup>And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. <sup>12</sup>Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. <sup>13</sup>Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

<sup>14</sup>So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful. <sup>15</sup>The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. <sup>16</sup>He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

<sup>17</sup>But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. <sup>18</sup>And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? <sup>19</sup>Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way." <sup>20</sup>So Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

### Something to Think About

Because of famine, Abram leaves the place to which God has called him. He goes to Egypt, which in Scripture often symbolizes the world and bondage. He did not consult with

43

God. Then because of fear, Abram tells a lie. It was true that his wife Sarai was also his half-sister. But he deliberately deceived the people of that place into thinking that she was not his wife. How tragic it is when God's people act in ways that bring reproof even from the world! The world expects us to have a high standard of behavior.

Abram *thought* he would be killed. Wrong thoughts are often the first step into sin. **"Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"** (2 Corinthians 10:5). Fear is not from God—have faith! **"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind"** (2 Timothy 1:7).

Giving in to sin, however small it is, makes it easier to repeat that sin later. Abram did the same thing again in Genesis chapter 20. It was probably in Egypt that Hagar joined their household, leading to Abram's sad compromise (Story 14).

God allows the iniquity of the fathers to affect the children even to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 34:7). Unless we as parents turn from our sins and are forgiven, the same sins will appear in the lives of our children. Abram's deception was repeated in Isaac's life, when Isaac told the same lie about his wife Rebekah—only she was not even a half-sister (Genesis 26:1-11). Later Isaac's son, Jacob, was involved in much deception (Stories 24 and 30). Jacob's sons continued the cycle of deception (Story 35). How important it is to deal with sin in our lives before it becomes a chain to our descendants! How important it is to seek God in a crisis, so we do not stray from His will! **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths"** (Proverbs 3:5-6).

44

### Sarai Is an Example to Wives

Sarai could have been much afraid in this situation, but God took care of her, even though her husband was not doing what was right. God does not want a wife to nag her husband, but to be an example to him. He wants the adorning of a wife to be **"a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God"** (1 Peter 3:4b). **"For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror"** (1 Peter 3:5-6). If God wants a wife to speak to her husband about his behavior, she should share her concern in the right spirit and then leave it to God to work in her husband's heart. **"My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him"** (Psalm 62:5).

## STORY 11. ABRAM AND LOT SEPARATE



Genesis 13:1-15

<sup>1</sup>Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South. <sup>2</sup>Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold. <sup>3</sup>And he went on his journey from the South as far as

Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, 'to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD. <sup>5</sup>Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. <sup>6</sup>Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. <sup>7</sup>And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The

45

Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. <sup>8</sup>So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. <sup>9</sup>Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left."

<sup>10</sup>And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward

Zoar. <sup>11</sup>Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other. <sup>12</sup>Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched his tent even as far as Sodom.

<sup>13</sup>But the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD. <sup>14</sup>And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; <sup>15</sup>for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever."

### Abram Gets Back Into God's Will

Abram decided not to go his own way anymore. He went back to the place of obedience, to the place of the altar, and called on the name of the Lord. He established communion with his God again. **"The LORD upholds all who fall, and raises up all those who are bowed down"** (Psalm 145:14). **"For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust"** (Psalm 103:11-14). God loves for us to return to Him.

Another crisis had arisen. This time Abram did what was right. He was willing to give up what was rightfully his in

46

order to seek peace. **"Better is a little with righteousness, than vast revenues without justice"** (Proverbs 16:8). Lot chose what was best to his eyes, but it became a snare to his soul. For Abram's unselfishness, God rewarded him by repeating His promise of great provision. When we do what is right and what God wants, God will take care of our needs. **"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"** (Matthew 6:33).

### STORY 12. ABRAM RESCUES LOT

Genesis 14:8-12, 14-16, 18-23

<sup>8</sup>And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim <sup>9</sup>against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five. <sup>10</sup>Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains. <sup>11</sup>Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way. <sup>12</sup>They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. <sup>14</sup>Now when Abram heard that

his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. <sup>15</sup>He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. <sup>16</sup>So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.

<sup>18</sup>Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. <sup>19</sup>And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; <sup>20</sup>And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of

47

all. <sup>21</sup>Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." <sup>22</sup>But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the

Possessor of heaven and earth, <sup>23</sup>that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.'"

### Something to Think About

Because Lot was living in a wicked place, he suffered the consequences of the lifestyle of the people in that place. Do you open yourself up to needless conflict because of following worldly ways?

How wonderful that Abram did not hold a grudge against Lot for choosing the best land! His spirit was free to help Lot when Lot was in trouble.

Abram was already *prepared* for battle. He had a strategy, and he was willing to *go all the way*—a very far distance—until the victory was won. We, too, know people who have been taken captive by Satan or who are kept from victory in Christ. How can we arm ourselves for spiritual battle?

**"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the**

48

**Spirit, being watchful to this end will all perseverance and supplication for all the saints"** (Ephesians 6:12-18).

### Jesus Is a Priest-King Like Melchizedek

Abram refused to take a reward from the wicked, worldly king of Sodom. He knew that God possessed heaven and earth and could give him anything that he needed. He did not want to receive honor from men, but from God.

But Abram gave tithes to Melchizedek, the king of Salem (probably Jerusalem). Salem means "peace." Melchizedek means "king of righteousness." Giving a tenth of all he had brought a blessing to Abram. **"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it"** (Malachi 3:10).

Jesus also is the King of Peace and the King of Righteousness. He also is a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews chapter 7). He receives our tithes and blesses us. He offers us the bread and wine of His broken body and shed blood, giving us life and strength for service. As our high priest, Jesus offered up Himself for us, and now He lives in the presence of the Most High God for us, making intercession for us. We can come boldly to God through Jesus. What a wonderful Priest-King is our Lord Jesus!



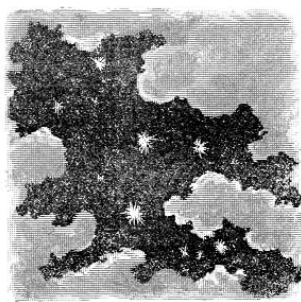
### STORY 13. GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAM

Genesis 15:1, 5-18

<sup>1</sup>After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a

vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

49



<sup>7</sup>Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." <sup>8</sup>And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. <sup>9</sup>Then He said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it." <sup>10</sup>And he said, "Lord GOD, how shall I know that I will inherit it?" <sup>11</sup>So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon."

<sup>12</sup>Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each

piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. <sup>13</sup>And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. <sup>14</sup>Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. <sup>15</sup>Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. <sup>16</sup>And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. <sup>17</sup>Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. <sup>18</sup>But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." <sup>19</sup>And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. <sup>20</sup>On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates."

50

and around the two parts in a figure 8 (symbolizing eternity), as was the custom, for an everlasting covenant. Abram was put into a deep sleep while God and the light of the world, Jesus—in Abram's place—"cut the covenant."

Faith in God is always proved by obedience to Him. Abram showed evidence of his faith in God by obediently bringing the animals and by driving off the birds of prey. Later he would obey God by being circumcised as a sign that he, too, entered into the blood covenant. All that God promised Abram has happened just as He said it would.

Jesus came that we, too, might enter into a covenant relationship with God. He took upon Himself our sin and clothed us with His righteousness. Our weakness is made perfect in His strength. He gives us the sword of the Spirit and all authority over the enemy. He offers that we be forever His. He promises to be with us forever. He shed His blood for us; He laid down His life for us and calls us His friends! We enter this wonderful exchange by faith, just as Abraham did. **"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"** (Galatians 3:29). All that God's Word promises us will happen, too. **"Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham"** (Galatians 3:7). **"So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham"** (Galatians 3:9).

What should be *our* response—the evidence of *our* faith? **"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service"** (Romans 12:1). What a high calling! Like Abraham we should do everything we can to fight off any "birds of prey" that would try to thwart God's purposes for us. **"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands...; and purify your hearts"** (James 4:7-8a).

52

## God Is Our Shield and Reward

Abram could have been much afraid that the kings he had defeated would come back for revenge. But God promised to be his shield. Abram had refused to accept a reward from a worldly king. Now God promised to be his reward. The reward Abram wanted was a child. God promised to give him a child of his very own. We, too, can claim God as our shield whenever we are in danger of any kind. **"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him"** (Psalm 28:7). **"But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!"** (2 Chronicles 15:7). **"He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"** (Hebrews 11:6b).

## The Blood Covenant

In ancient times people would "cut a covenant" to become ONE. Two parties would:

1. Exchange coats, meaning, "All I have I give you."
2. Exchange swords, belts, bows (weapons), meaning, "All my strength is yours."
3. Exchange names, meaning, "All I am is yours."
4. Exchange blood, meaning, "All my life is yours."

Here we see God making such a blood covenant with Abram. First, He told Abram, **"I am your shield."** This meant that all of God's strength was at Abram's disposal. Then God said, **"I am your exceedingly great reward."** That meant that God would give Abram all that he needed. In Genesis 17 (Story 15), God gives Abram a new name, Abraham. He inserts into Abram's name part of His name, YAHWEH (Jehovah), the great I AM. God Himself takes Abraham's name by later identifying Himself as "the God of Abraham." Finally, the sacrificial animals were divided and the two parties making the covenant were to walk between

51

## STORY 14. THE STORY OF HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

Genesis 16:1-10, 13, 15-16

<sup>1</sup>Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. <sup>2</sup>So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. <sup>3</sup>Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. <sup>4</sup>So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. <sup>5</sup>Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me." <sup>6</sup>So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you

please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. <sup>7</sup>Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. <sup>8</sup>And He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." <sup>9</sup>The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand." <sup>10</sup>Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." <sup>11</sup>Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?" <sup>12</sup>So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. <sup>13</sup>Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

## Something to Think About

Hagar found herself in such a frustrating circumstance that she ran away. Part of her problem was not her fault. She was suffering because Abram and Sarai had not trust-

53



ed God to fulfill His promise in His own way and in His own time. But part of the problem was Hagar's as well. She was disrespectful and proud. Yet how wonderful that God came to her and comforted her! He gave her some wonderful promises and also a command. She was to return to her mistress and submit herself under her hands. **"Submitting to one another in the fear of God"** (Ephesians 5:21). God wants us to do that, too. Submission does not imply inferiority or being lesser in importance. Remember, Jesus was submissive to His Father, yet they were equal. Being submissive to our circumstances (accepting and rejoicing in what God permits to happen in our lives) shows our true faith in God's wisdom and sovereignty. Then He can bless us.

## STORY 15. CIRCUMCISION IS A SIGN OF GOD'S COVENANT

Genesis 17:1-5, 10, 15-16, 23

<sup>1</sup>When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. <sup>2</sup>And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly." <sup>3</sup>Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. <sup>4</sup>No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.

<sup>10</sup>"This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised."

<sup>15</sup>Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. <sup>16</sup>And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

<sup>23</sup>So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male

54

among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him.

## Something to Think About

Thirteen years after Abram had tried to help God fulfill His promise of a son, God speaks to him again. God reminds him that He is *Almighty*. He is perfectly able to do anything He has promised. Then He asks Abram to walk before Him and to be perfect. We can be mature, complete, and perfect in God's sight only as we walk before Him, one step at a time. Are there things in your life that you need an *Almighty* God to handle? Stop trying to do it yourself. List every concern you have and commit them to Him. **"Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass"** (Psalm 37:5).

What a step of faith it was for Abram to receive from God his new name! Abram means "father of *many*." Was it an embarrassment to Abram, with a name like that, to be father of only one son—and that son begotten through his own scheming? Now his new name, Abraham, would mean "father of a *multitude*." How God wants to stretch our faith even in the face of seeming impossibilities!

As Abraham's part of keeping covenant with God, God asked that every male be circumcised. Abraham obeyed immediately.

Circumcision—physically, a cutting of the flesh—has spiritual significance. Spiritual circumcision is a spiritual operation done by God, not ourselves, to cut off our desire for sin or to cut out of our lives what is of the flesh. **"And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live"** (Deuteronomy 30:6). It is not *outward* circumcision that shows you are one of God's people but an *inward* work—"circumcision is

55

that of the heart, in the Spirit" (Romans 2:29). We are made perfect and complete *in Christ*. **"In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead"** (Colossians 2:11-12). Christ's death on the cross made it possible for our old, sinful self to die as we accept His death for us. Christ's resurrection from the dead empowers us to arise to a new life. We do not need to be in bondage to sin anymore. **"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. . . . But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him"** (Colossians 3:5, 8-10).

**"But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God"** (Ephesians 5:3-5).

David said, **"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered"** (Romans 4:7). He described the blessedness of the man who is counted by God as righteous even when he has not lived righteously. We see that Abraham was not counted righteous because of *circumcision*, but because of his *faith*. Circumci-

56

sion came *afterwards* as a seal that he had already been counted righteous by God. **"And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also"** (Romans 4:11). We cannot make ourselves righteous by cutting off bad habits here and there. We have to come to Christ as sinners and accept His *gift* of righteousness by faith in Christ. When we accept the fact that Christ took our sins on Himself and died for us, we can *by faith* accept the fact that our sins are *gone*, crucified with Christ. If we see sin in our lives, or anything displeasing to God, we can take it to the cross and count it dead. This releases in us the powerful resurrection life of Jesus and makes it possible for us to be free to serve God in righteousness. **"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live"** (Romans 8:1-2, 13). Christ's righteousness is already ours by faith, but it is important to immediately cut out of our lives whatever He commands, through the power of the Spirit in us, as a sign of our covenant relationship with Him.

## STORY 16. ABRAHAM HAS THREE VISITORS

Genesis 18:1-15

<sup>1</sup>Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. <sup>2</sup>So he lifted his eyes and looked,

and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, <sup>3</sup>and said, "My Lord, if I have now found

57



favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. 'Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 'And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.' And they said, 'Do as you have said.' 'So Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah and said, 'Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes.' 'And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. 'So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had

prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. 'Then they said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' And he said, 'Here, in the tent.' 'And He said, 'I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him. 'Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 'Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?' 'And the LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' 'Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.' 'But Sarah denied it, saying, 'I did not laugh,' for she was afraid. And He said, 'No, but you did laugh!'

### Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?

At first, Sarah laughed at the Lord's promise because of her unbelief. But we know that later she did believe, and God was able to give her a son. God cannot work where

58

there is unbelief. "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised" (Hebrews 11:11). God knows all our thoughts and inner reactions to His promises, just as He knew Sarah laughed. When Mary, the mother of Jesus, was told she would bear the Messiah even though she had no husband, she was told, "For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37). Later her cousin Elizabeth said of her, "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord" (Luke 1:45). It pays to believe God.

### STORY 17. ABRAHAM INTERCEDES FOR LOT

Genesis 18:16-33

<sup>16</sup>Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. <sup>17</sup>And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, <sup>18</sup>since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? <sup>19</sup>For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him." <sup>20</sup>And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great,

and because their sin is very grievous, <sup>21</sup>I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know." <sup>22</sup>Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD. <sup>23</sup>And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? <sup>24</sup>Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? <sup>25</sup>Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it

59

from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" <sup>26</sup>And the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." <sup>27</sup>Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: <sup>28</sup>Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?" And He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it." <sup>29</sup>Then he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?" And He said, "I will not do it for the sake of forty." <sup>30</sup>And he said, "Let not

the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." <sup>31</sup>Then he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of twenty." <sup>32</sup>And he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." <sup>33</sup>So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

### Abraham Was a Friend of God

" 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23b). Jesus said, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:14-15). Abraham trusted God and obeyed God. God considered Abraham a friend, so God shared with His friend Abraham just what He was planning to do concerning Sodom and Gomorrah. This led Abraham to boldly intercede for Lot, his nephew, who lived in Sodom.

God listened to Abraham, His friend. Although He couldn't

60

save Sodom, He did save Lot. We do not always know how to pray as we should, but we shouldn't stop praying. Our prayers make a difference, even if God's purposes must still be carried out.

Abraham's intercession for Lot was specific. It was reverently humble ("I who am but dust and ashes"). It was mixed with faith. (He knew that the Judge of all the earth would do right.) We, too, need to make specific intercession for those around us who are not ready for God's judgment. God has shared with us that He is going to judge the earth with fire. We can trust God to do what is just and right.

### STORY 18. GOD DESTROYS SODOM AND GOMORRAH



Genesis 19:1-17, 24-26

<sup>1</sup>Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. <sup>2</sup>And he said, "Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet;

then you may rise early and go on your way." And they said, "No, but we will spend the night in the open square." <sup>3</sup>But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. <sup>4</sup>Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. <sup>5</sup>And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally." <sup>6</sup>So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, <sup>7</sup>and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do

61

so wickedly! <sup>9</sup>See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."

<sup>9</sup>And they said, "Stand back!" Then they said, "This one came in to sojourn, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them." So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. <sup>10</sup>But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. <sup>11</sup>And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door.

<sup>12</sup>Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place! <sup>13</sup>For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it." <sup>14</sup>So Lot went

out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

<sup>15</sup>When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city."

<sup>16</sup>And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. <sup>17</sup>So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

<sup>18</sup>Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. <sup>19</sup>So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. <sup>20</sup>But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

62

## The Tragic Fruits of Living Close to Sin

Lot began well as he went out to the promised land with Abraham. But he allowed friction and love of possessions to cause wrong choices. Sodom was an exceedingly sinful city. Homosexuality pervaded the city. The inhabitants had no regard for righteous living. Yet we see how, little by little, Lot came to live in this wicked place:

**Genesis 13:11** Lot chose the plain of Jordan.

**Genesis 13:12** He pitched his tent as far as Sodom.

**Genesis 14:12** He lived in Sodom.

**Genesis 19:1** He sat in the gate of Sodom. This means he had a position of authority there. He was one of its judges.

Lot had already been warned of the consequences of living in Sodom when he had to be rescued by Abraham (Story 12). Because of his compromise, Lot lost his influence in the city and in his own family. His own standards were lowered (he offered his virgin daughters to the men of the city!) His daughters' standards were low. (They later committed incest with him after getting him drunk. This resulted in Lot's fathering the Ammonites and the Moabites, mortal enemies of Abraham's godly seed.) Lot's own wife was so attached to the city that she looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. The Bible never tells of Lot ever building an altar to the Lord as Abraham did. How tragic when the head of the home does not seek to be close to God!

God made Sodom and Gomorrah an example of what He would do to those who live ungodly lives. "For if God... delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—then the Lord

63

knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment" (2 Peter 2:4a, 7-9).

God calls His people to come out of wickedness: "And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues'" (Revelation 18:4).

Yes, Lot was counted righteous by God. But his life work and his possessions were all burned up, though he himself was saved. "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Corinthians 3:15). What a warning Lot's life is to us!

Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it" (Luke 17:32-33).

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). "And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17).

## STORY 19. ISAAC IS BORN

Genesis 21:1-7

<sup>1</sup>And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. <sup>2</sup>For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. <sup>3</sup>And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. <sup>4</sup>Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac

when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup>Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup>And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with me." <sup>7</sup>She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age."

64

## Faith Is Rewarded

"Isaac" means "laughter." Sarah had once laughed in unbelief; now she laughs with joy. What joy there is when a new life is born! What greater joy there is when a sinner repents and is born of the Spirit! All heaven rejoices (Luke 15:7). Do you rejoice and thank God for salvation and the miracle of your new life in Him?

The son of promise had been born—not through the efforts of Abraham and Sarah, but through the supernatural work of God. "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore 'it was accounted to him for righteousness'" (Romans 4:20-22). Through Isaac the world would be blessed. Through Isaac the nation of Israel came into being. Through Isaac Jesus Christ—the Savior—was born. Rejoice!

## STORY 20. THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON MUST LEAVE

Genesis 21:8-20

<sup>8</sup>So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. <sup>9</sup>And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. <sup>10</sup>Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac." <sup>11</sup>And the matter was very displeasing in

Abraham's sight because of his son. <sup>12</sup>But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. <sup>13</sup>Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed." <sup>14</sup>So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder,

65





he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. <sup>15</sup>And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. <sup>16</sup>Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a

bowshot; for she said to herself, "Let me not see the death of the boy." So she sat opposite him, and lifted her voice and wept. <sup>17</sup>And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. <sup>18</sup>Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation." <sup>19</sup>And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. Then she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. <sup>20</sup>So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

### Ishmael Mocks Isaac

The life of Ishmael gives us a picture of the self-effort of man, the old nature, the flesh that wants its own way. Isaac is a picture of the miracle of God, the new man, the Spirit within that wants to follow God. "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.' So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free" (Galatians 4:28-31).

It was most painful to Abraham to have to send away his

firstborn son. But God told him to follow the advice of his wife and send him away. There could be no peace otherwise.

Paul described the struggle of the old man and the new man within our being: "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:22-24). Paul knew the solution: "I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25a).

We must choose to walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. "For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:6-9).

The old fleshly nature has been crucified with Christ. So why should we allow it to continue to control us? "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:12-13).

Are you allowing "Ishmael"—the old nature—any place in your heart? "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not

let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life" (Romans 6:6, 11-12, 21-22). We are new creatures and have the power of God to walk in His Spirit. There *can* be peace in your heart.

### God Cares for Hagar

We should always obey God even if we fear that our obedience might cause suffering for others. We see that when Abraham obeyed God, God wonderfully took care of Hagar.

### STORY 21. GOD TESTS ABRAHAM'S FAITH

Genesis 22:1-18

<sup>1</sup>Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>2</sup>Then He said, "Take now 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." <sup>3</sup>So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. <sup>4</sup>Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar

off. <sup>5</sup>And Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you." <sup>6</sup>So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. <sup>7</sup>But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." Then he said, "Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" <sup>8</sup>And Abraham said, "My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering." So the two of them went together. <sup>9</sup>Then they came to the place of which God had



told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. <sup>10</sup>And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. <sup>11</sup>But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." <sup>12</sup>And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son,

from Me." <sup>13</sup>Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

<sup>14</sup>And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided." <sup>15</sup>Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, <sup>16</sup>and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son <sup>17</sup>in blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the sea-shore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. <sup>18</sup>In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

### True Faith Leads to Obedience

Abraham had so much trust in God and believed so strongly that God would fulfill His promises through Isaac that he was able to offer Isaac to God. He knew that God could provide a substitute sacrifice. He knew that, if need be, God was able to raise Isaac back to life (Hebrews 11:17-

19). Abraham's faith was strong because he knew God so well. His faith had been strengthened by all the other times he had exercised his faith and God had been faithful. Abraham was able to tell the young men with him that he and Isaac would *both* come back after they had gone up to worship (Genesis 22:5).

Isaac and Jesus were alike in that each was submissive to his father even to the point of death. Isaac was well-grown and could have resisted his father's will. Jesus, who was God made in the likeness of men, "**humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross**" (Philippians 2:8b). Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice. Jesus carried the wood of His cross (John 19:17). Both were laid upon the wood. For Isaac, God provided a substitute sacrifice. As for Jesus, He was the sinless Lamb provided by God as a substitute for *us* who deserved to die for our own sins.

When Abraham made the decision to trust God and offer Isaac, Isaac was as good as dead. But on the *third* day after his decision, Abraham "received" him back as from the dead. Likewise, Jesus rose from the dead on the third day after He was crucified. Through Jesus, as through Isaac, all the nations of the earth are blessed.

## STORY 22. ABRAHAM SEEKS A WIFE FOR ISAAC

If you have a Bible, you will want to read this beautiful story in Genesis chapter 24. Sarah has now died. Abraham is concerned that Isaac have a wife—not from among the ungodly Canaanite people, but from his own people back in Mesopotamia. He sends a trusted servant, possibly Eliezer, to find a wife for Isaac.

Eliezer prays fervently for God's guidance and blessing on his mission. When he arrives at the time of the evening when the woman would come out of the city to draw water,

70



he prays, "Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'—let her be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master" (Genesis 24:14).

Before he has finished speaking, Rebekah—the granddaughter of Abraham's brother—comes out, agrees to give Eliezer a drink, and then offers to give his camels a drink also.

When Eliezer finds out who she is, he worships the Lord, praising Him for His guidance. Eliezer excitedly tells Rebekah's family the whole story, and they feel that God is in it. They ask Rebekah, "**Will you go with this man?**" She says, "**I will go**" (Genesis 24:58).

As they near their journey's end, Rebekah sees Isaac walking in a field. He has been meditating in the evening. "**Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death**" (Genesis 24:67).



71

## Lessons About Guidance

Abraham's servant sought guidance based upon God's revealed principles. First, he sought a wife for Isaac from among God's people. Second, he prayed that the outward circumstances would confirm the choice. Rebekah was willing to water the camels, her family was willing to let her go, and she herself said she would go. Third, in prayer the servant felt full inner assurance from God that this was His will. "**And let the peace of God rule in your hearts**" (Colossians 3:15a). All three of these steps need to be in agreement in order for us to be assured of God's guidance.

## Lessons About Marriage

Much prayer went into the choice of a wife for Isaac. It is well to pray even now concerning suitable partners for our children. It is good to trust for God's choice. God wants His children to marry someone from the family of God. "**Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'** Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty' " (2 Corinthians 6:14, 16-18).

## A Picture of Christ and His Bride

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31-32).

72

Each of the characters in this Genesis story has symbolic significance for us today:

**ABRAHAM** is a beautiful picture of our heavenly Father. Both Abraham and our heavenly Father had beloved sons, born miraculously. Both had sons who were willing to be offered up. Both offered up their sons at the same place. (Mount Moriah is where the temple at Jerusalem was later built.) Both received their sons back with great joy. Both made careful preparations for their sons' weddings.

**ISAAC** is a type of the Lord Jesus. Both Isaac and Jesus had been offered up as a sacrifice. Both seek a bride. Like Isaac, Jesus loves His bride dearly. "**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it**" (Ephesians 5:25).

**ELIEZER** is a picture of the Holy Spirit, who is sent from the Father to seek a bride for the Son. The Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-41) for one reason: to gather a bride for God's Son, Jesus Christ. While in Mesopotamia, Eliezer constantly honored Abraham and Isaac. The Holy Spirit always testifies of Christ (John 15:26).

**REBEKAH** is a picture of the Church of Jesus Christ. Before anyone can become part of the bride of Christ, he or she must individually consent to leave his world behind and follow Christ. Have you responded wholeheartedly to follow the Holy Spirit's direction throughout your lifetime until you meet Christ, your heavenly bridegroom, face to face?

"And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.' And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:6-8).

73

## STORY 23. THE STORY OF JACOB AND ESAU

Genesis 25:19-34

<sup>19</sup>This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac. <sup>20</sup>Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. <sup>21</sup>Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. <sup>22</sup>But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If all is well, why am I like this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. <sup>23</sup>And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger." <sup>24</sup>So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb. <sup>25</sup>And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. <sup>26</sup>Afterward his brother came out, and his hand

took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

<sup>27</sup>So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. <sup>28</sup>And Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

<sup>29</sup>Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary. <sup>30</sup>And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom. <sup>31</sup>But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." <sup>32</sup>And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what profit shall this birthright be to me?" <sup>33</sup>Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. <sup>34</sup>And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

### Something to Do

1. Isaac \_\_\_\_\_ with the Lord for his \_\_\_\_\_ because she was \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord answered Isaac's

74

prayer, and Rebekah his wife \_\_\_\_\_ (verse 21).

2. Isaac was \_\_\_\_\_ years old when he married Rebekah (20). He was \_\_\_\_\_ years old when his twins were born (26). Therefore, he had waited \_\_\_\_\_ years.

3. Rebekah also had a problem. The children \_\_\_\_\_ together within her. She went to \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord (22). The Lord explained that two \_\_\_\_\_ were in her womb (23). The \_\_\_\_\_ would serve the \_\_\_\_\_ (23).

[God was referring to the Edomites and the Israelites, descendants of Esau and Jacob.]

What barrenness in your life or in the life of someone close to you can you pray about? What conflict within you do you need to inquire of the Lord about, confident that He will give you a satisfying answer? **"In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me"** (Psalm 86:7).

4. Isaac loved \_\_\_\_\_, because he \_\_\_\_\_ of his \_\_\_\_\_ (28).

5. Rebekah loved \_\_\_\_\_ (28). Jacob was a \_\_\_\_\_ man, dwelling in \_\_\_\_\_ (27). Esau was a skillful \_\_\_\_\_, a man of the \_\_\_\_\_ (27).

[Abraham had left God's place for him because of a lack of food (Story 10); Abraham's son Isaac loved one son above another (in spite of the fact that the son was ungodly) because of his love for food; Isaac's son Esau in turn gave up his birthright for the sake of one meal. Thus we see weaknesses in one generation continuing to the second and third generations with increasing intensity.]

What weaknesses of yours have you seen in your own children? What have you done about these in your own life? **"First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye"** (Matthew 7:5b).

75

## Esau Sells His Birthright

The firstborn's birthright included *three* things:

1. He would be head of the family.
2. He would take spiritual leadership.
3. He would receive a double portion of the inheritance.

Why would Esau, for one meal, give all this up? Hebrews 12:16 describes Esau as a profane (ungodly) person. He was not interested in spiritual, family things. God knew this when He said, **"Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated"** (Romans 9:13). Before the boys were born, God told Rebekah that the older would serve the younger.

Even though Jacob used wrong methods to obtain the birthright, we see that he valued it. He valued God's will, God's purpose, God's promises, God's presence, God's family, God's blessing, God's Word, God's ways, and God's wisdom. Esau's god was his belly. **"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things"** (Philippians 3:18-19). Are there earthly things which are more important to you than the things of God? Do you seek God's face? Do you seek His will and claim His promises?

## STORY 24. JACOB DECEIVES HIS FATHER

Genesis 27:1-23, 30-36a, 38, 41-43

<sup>1</sup>Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." And he answered him, "Here I am."

<sup>2</sup>Then he said, "Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. <sup>3</sup>Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. <sup>4</sup>And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I



may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die." <sup>5</sup>Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring it. <sup>6</sup>So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, "Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, <sup>7</sup>'Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.' <sup>8</sup>Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. <sup>9</sup>Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. <sup>10</sup>Then you shall take it to your father, that he may eat it, and that he may bless you before his death." <sup>11</sup>And Jacob said to Rebekah his

mother, "Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man. <sup>12</sup>Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing." <sup>13</sup>But his mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me." <sup>14</sup>And he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. <sup>15</sup>Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. <sup>16</sup>And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. <sup>17</sup>Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. <sup>18</sup>So he went to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" <sup>19</sup>And Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." <sup>20</sup>But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my

76

77



son?" And he said, "Because the LORD your God brought it to me." <sup>21</sup>Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." <sup>22</sup>So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." <sup>23</sup>And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. <sup>30</sup>Then it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. <sup>31</sup>He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me." <sup>32</sup>And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." <sup>33</sup>Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he

shall be blessed." <sup>34</sup>When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" <sup>35</sup>But he said, "Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing." <sup>36</sup>And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!" <sup>38</sup>And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. <sup>40</sup>So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob." <sup>42</sup>And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you by intending to kill you." <sup>43</sup>Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran.

78

## Doing God's Work in God's Way

God had told Rebekah that His blessing would be upon Jacob, not Esau. But Isaac, even when he thought he was at the point of death, had his mind on his stomach rather than on God's will. However, it is never right to do evil that good may come (Romans 3:8). The deception of Rebekah and Jacob divided the family, and after Jacob fled, Rebekah never saw her favorite son again.

What should wives do when their husbands are not obeying God's will? **"Likewise you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear"** (1 Peter 3:1-2). Rebekah's behavior showed that she did not really believe God would bring about what He had promised. Do we ever try to fulfill God's promises in our own way and thus bring discord into the family of God? God wants us to patiently wait for Him.

Isaac did not honor what God had told his wife about the boys when they were in her womb (Story 23). **"Likewise you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered"** (1 Peter 3:7). Although women are physically and emotionally more delicate than men, both men and women are equal heirs of God's grace. When there is division between husband and wife, prayers are hindered.

The way to God's blessing is through the door of repentance. But Esau was not willing to repent. He had already sold his birthright and married pagan wives, showing he had no interest in God's purposes. When he lost his father's blessing, hatred grew in his heart until he wanted to murder his brother. **"For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no**

79

place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears" (Hebrews 12:17). He sought the blessing with tears, but he did not find it in his heart to repent of the ways which had made him lose the blessing. **"For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death"** (2 Corinthians 7:10).

## STORY 25. JACOB'S DREAM AT BETHEL

Genesis 28:10-19a

<sup>10</sup>Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. <sup>11</sup>So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. <sup>12</sup>Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. <sup>13</sup>And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. <sup>14</sup>Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families

of the earth shall be blessed. <sup>15</sup>Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

<sup>16</sup>Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the



80

house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" <sup>18</sup>Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his

head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. <sup>19</sup>And he called the name of that place Bethel.

## Jesus Is the Way to Heaven

What a consolation this dream was to a young man who had to flee from his home to a far country! God came to him, showing that the way to God was open, even though Jacob was a sinner. God renewed the covenant of Abraham with him and promised to be with him wherever he went. We know that we can have this same direct access to God today through Jesus. **"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me' "** (John 14:6).

Jesus once described Himself in a way that reminds us of the ladder in Jacob's dream when He said, **"Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man"** (John 1:51b). The angels are ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14). Jesus also promises His continual presence with us. **"And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"** (Matthew 28:20b).

Jacob awoke to a new realization of God's presence. Immediately he built an altar to God as a means of worship. He called the place Beth-el, which means "house of God." When we come to God through Christ, we too, awoken to a new realization of God's presence, His promises, and His peace.

**"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water"** (Hebrews 10:19, 22).

81

## STORY 26. JACOB SERVES FOR RACHEL

Genesis 29:1-2, 10-13, 16-20

<sup>1</sup>So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east. <sup>2</sup>And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone was on the well's mouth.

<sup>10</sup>And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. <sup>11</sup>Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. <sup>12</sup>And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's relative and that he was Rebekah's son. So she ran and told her

father. <sup>13</sup>Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house....

<sup>16</sup>Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. <sup>17</sup>Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance. <sup>18</sup>Now Jacob loved Rachel; and he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter." <sup>19</sup>And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me." <sup>20</sup>So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed but a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

### Jesus Came As a Servant

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Though Jesus, God's Son, came seeking a bride, He came as a servant. He showed His disciples this at supper the last night before He was crucified. He washed their feet; He did the work of a servant. "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). Jacob's service showed

82

his great love for Rachel. Our service to others is what will show them the great love God has for them.

The time Jacob served seemed as nothing because of his great love for Rachel. Jesus, also, was willing to endure much because of the joy He looked forward to. **"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"** (Hebrews 12:2). We, too, may encounter hard and long service to win others to the Lord.

## STORY 27. LABAN DECEIVES JACOB

Genesis 29:21-30

<sup>21</sup>Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her." <sup>22</sup>And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. <sup>23</sup>Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. <sup>24</sup>And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. <sup>25</sup>So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why

then have you deceived me?"

<sup>26</sup>And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. <sup>27</sup>Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years." <sup>28</sup>Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. <sup>29</sup>And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. <sup>30</sup>Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.

### We Reap What We Sow

**"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap"** (Galatians 6:7). Jacob

83

had driven a hard bargain to purchase Esau's birthright. Now Laban drives a hard bargain with Jacob in his getting a wife. Jacob had deceived his dying father. Now Laban deceives Jacob. What a bitter thing! **"Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same"** (Job 4:8). When we plant corn, rice, or wheat, we reap corn, rice, or wheat. Likewise when we sow deception, discord, and unkindness, we get deception, discord, and unkindness in return. **"All who take the sword will perish by the sword"** (Matthew 26:52b). How much better to sow kindness, truth, and peace! **"Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you"** (Hosea 10:12). Yes, God was using these circumstances to break up the unusable, hard ground of Jacob's life. What God had started at Bethel He would continue. **"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ"** (Philippians 1:6).

## STORY 28. GOD BLESSES LEAH

Genesis 29:31-35

<sup>31</sup>When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. <sup>32</sup>So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me." <sup>33</sup>Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am un-

loved, He has therefore given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. <sup>34</sup>She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi. <sup>35</sup>And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now I will praise the LORD." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

84

### God Loves the Unloved



Do you feel unloved and rejected? Take heart! Jesus understands what it means to be rejected, and God has great compassion for what man despises.

**"Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed.... For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name.... For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused," says your God** (Isaiah 54:4-6). **"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take care of me"** (Psalm 27:10). **"Let your conduct be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'"** (Hebrews 13:5-6).

As we can see by the names Leah gave to her children, her focus changed from expecting her needs to be met by her husband to praising God. When Reuben was born, she felt that surely now her husband would love her. "Reuben" means *"See, a son."* When Simeon was born, she realized that God was hearing her prayers. "Simeon" means *"Hearing."* When Levi was born, she began to have confidence that her husband would become joined to her by God. "Levi" means *"Joined."* But her trust in God reaches new heights when her fourth son is born. She named him "Judah," meaning *"Praise."*

Even though Leah's earthly circumstances were sorrowful, God blessed her with eternal blessings. He allowed her to bear Jacob's *firstborn*, Reuben—a great honor. Through

85

Levi would come the priestly tribe of the nation of Israel. They would have great honor in ministering to the Lord. And through Judah would come a line of kings, including the King of kings, the Messiah—Jesus. What honor God bestowed on rejected Leah! When Leah died, she was buried with honor beside Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and with her husband Jacob. **“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal”** (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

If God allows the desire of your heart to be withheld for a time, look for the joy He has for you which will give eternal satisfaction. **“Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart”** (Psalm 37:4).

## STORY 29. JEALOUSY IN JACOB'S FAMILY

Genesis 30:1-24

<sup>1</sup>Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!” <sup>2</sup>And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?” <sup>3</sup>So she said, “Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her.” <sup>4</sup>Then she gave him Bilhah her

maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. <sup>5</sup>And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. <sup>6</sup>Then Rachel said, “God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son.” Therefore she called his name Dan. <sup>7</sup>And Rachel’s maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. <sup>8</sup>Then Rachel said, “With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed.” So she called his name Naphtali.

<sup>9</sup>When Leah saw that she had

86



stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife. <sup>10</sup>And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. <sup>11</sup>Then Leah said, “A troop comes!” So she called his name Gad. <sup>12</sup>And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. <sup>13</sup>Then Leah said, “I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.” So she called his name Asher.

<sup>14</sup>Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.” <sup>15</sup>But she said to her, “Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?” And

Rachel said, “Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.”

<sup>16</sup>When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” And he lay with her that night. <sup>17</sup>And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. <sup>18</sup>Leah said, “God has given me my hire, because I have given my maid to my husband.” So she called his name Issachar. <sup>19</sup>Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. <sup>20</sup>And Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.” So she called his name Zebulun.

<sup>21</sup>Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

<sup>22</sup>Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. <sup>23</sup>And she conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach.” <sup>24</sup>So she called his name Joseph, and said, “The LORD shall add to me another son.”

87

## God Chastens His Sons

**“They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind”** (Hosea 8:7a). How this verse pictures Jacob’s life! His actions had caused division between his parents and division between himself and his twin brother. But now the division is multiplied in his own family—among his wives and among his sons.

But God is dealing with Jacob as with a son. **“For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”** If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? (Hebrews 12:6-7).

We must not despise the chastening of the Lord, or faint because of it. God uses it to make us what we should be. **“But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you”** (1 Peter 5:10).

How much lower can Jacob get? His firstborn son gives his first wife, Leah, mandrakes—a fruit thought to make the eater more fertile. Then the second wife, Rachel, bargains for the mandrakes by giving the first wife a night with Jacob, thinking that the first wife has left off bearing children. What a low point for Jacob! Yet God intervened, proving His sovereignty once more over the schemes of men (and women). **“A man’s heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps”** (Proverbs 16:9). Leah conceived another son, whom she thought of as her wages (blessing) from the Lord. She named this son Issachar, which means *“He gives wages.”*

## Something to Do

Through all the jealousies of a scheming household, God was raising up a family of twelve sons who would father the twelve tribes of His chosen nation, Israel. He planned to

88

entrust to that nation His Word and His Son, through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Fill in the blanks with the names of Jacob’s twelve sons. Use the Scripture passages in Story 28 and Story 29. The name of the twelfth son is filled in for you from Story 34.

## Meaning of Name

By Leah: (1) \_\_\_\_\_ “See, a son” (Gen. 29:32)  
(2) \_\_\_\_\_ “Hearing” (29:33)  
(3) \_\_\_\_\_ “Joined” (29:34)  
(4) \_\_\_\_\_ “Praise” (29:35)

By Rachel’s maid,  
Bilhah: (5) \_\_\_\_\_ “Judge” (30:6)  
(6) \_\_\_\_\_ “Wrestling” (30:8)

By Leah’s maid,  
Zilpah: (7) \_\_\_\_\_ “Troop” (30:10)  
(8) \_\_\_\_\_ “Gladness” (30:13)

By Leah (after mandrakes):  
(9) \_\_\_\_\_ “He gives wages” (30:18)  
(10) \_\_\_\_\_ “Dwelling” (30:20)  
By Rachel: (11) \_\_\_\_\_ “Adding” (30:24)  
(12) Benjamin “Son of my right hand” (35:18)

## STORY 30. JACOB LEAVES LABAN

Genesis 31:2-7, 20-21, 25a, 26-29, 44, 55

<sup>2</sup>And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favorable toward him as

before. <sup>3</sup>Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your kin-

89



dred, and I will be with you.”<sup>4</sup> So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock,<sup>5</sup> and said to them, “I see your father’s countenance, that it is not favorable toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me.<sup>6</sup> And you know that with all my might I have served your father.<sup>7</sup> Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me.<sup>8</sup> <sup>20</sup>And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee.<sup>21</sup> So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.<sup>22</sup> So Laban overtook Jacob.<sup>26</sup> And Laban said to Jacob: “What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to

me, and carried away my daughters like captives taken with the sword?”<sup>27</sup> Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp?<sup>28</sup> And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in so doing.<sup>29</sup> It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.’<sup>44</sup> Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.”<sup>35</sup> And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

### Some Thoughts for Employees

Jacob had worked seven years for Rachel, but he was given Leah. Though Laban gave Rachel to Jacob a week later, Jacob still had to work seven more years for her. At the time Joseph was born, Jacob had finished working the fourteen years. He wanted to go back to the land of Canaan, but Laban wanted him to stay in Mesopotamia because he knew that the Lord had blessed him because of Jacob. Jacob consented and worked six more years. During that time Jacob used his skills and schemes to multiply what

90

Laban gave him. God blessed everything Jacob set his hand to do. Each time Laban told Jacob what would be his, God prospered Jacob in that area so much that Laban would change his mind and change Jacob’s wages. In spite of this, Jacob became very wealthy. Yet he was fair with what belonged to his employer.

**“Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh”** (1 Peter 2:18). **“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ”** (Colossians 3:22-24).

Jacob realized that Laban’s attitude toward him was not what it had been. Jacob was not bitter about his unjust treatment. He was able to praise God for His blessing. **“Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages”** (Luke 3:14b). **“But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God”** (1 Peter 2:20b). We, too, can take the plundering of our goods patiently and even joyfully, knowing that in heaven we have better and more enduring possessions (Hebrews 10:34).

God appeared again to Jacob, telling him to go back home. Perhaps because of fear, Jacob did not leave openly. But God wanted Jacob to learn not to run away from problems, so He allowed Laban to pursue Jacob without harming him so that they could experience reconciliation. **“For you shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight; for the LORD will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard”** (Isaiah 52:12). God does not want us to leave unfinished business behind us as we follow Him.

91

## STORY 31. JACOB FEARS TO MEET ESAU

Genesis 32:1-13, 20b

<sup>1</sup>So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.<sup>2</sup> When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is God’s camp.” And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.<sup>3</sup> Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.<sup>4</sup> And he commanded them, saying, “Speak thus to my lord Esau, ‘Your servant Jacob says: “I have sojourned with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.”’”<sup>5</sup> Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, “We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.”<sup>7</sup> So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies.<sup>8</sup> And he said, “If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape.” Then Jacob said, “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the

LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you’:<sup>10</sup> I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies.<sup>11</sup> Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children.<sup>12</sup> For You said, ‘I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”<sup>13</sup> So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother:<sup>20</sup> For he said, “I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.”



92

## Prayer Brings Peace

When you are afraid, do you *pray* or *panic*? As Jacob approached his homeland, he was greatly afraid that Esau would still want revenge. God let him see a large company of angels. **“The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them”** (Psalm 34:7). Jacob needed deliverance! Esau was coming with 400 men! **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”** (Philippians 4:6-7).

Jacob’s prayer in time of trouble has seven points that can be included in our prayers as well:

1. *He spoke to a personal God* (verse 9). When we know God personally, we can speak to Him as to a friend.
2. *He knew he was doing God’s will* (verse 9). **“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us”** (1 John 5:14).
3. *He humbled himself before God* (verse 10). He confessed his unworthiness to God. **“He will save the humble person”** (Job 22:29b). **“The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit”** (Psalm 34:18).
4. *He remembered what God had already done for him* (verse 10). God inhabits the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). **“Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore. Remember His marvelous works which He has done”** (Psalm 105:4-5a). **“My spirit is overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is distressed. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies; in You I take shelter”** (Psalm 143:4b-5, 9).

93

5. *He made a clear and specific request* (verse 11). **“Ask, and it will be given to you”** (Matthew 7:7a).

6. *He poured out his true feelings to God* (verse 11). **“Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us”** (Psalm 62:8).

7. *He relied on God’s promises* (verse 12). We can claim God’s promises by using the Word of God in prayer. **“Who through faith... obtained promises”** (Hebrews 11:33a).

It was after prayer that God gave Jacob a plan: to give a gift—580 animals—to *appease* his brother Esau. The word “appease” literally means “atonement,” “covering,” or “reconciliation.” Jacob hoped that his gift would help Esau forgive him. **“I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies”** (Psalm 18:3).

## STORY 32. JACOB WRESTLES WITH GOD



Genesis 32:22-28; 33:1-4

<sup>22</sup>And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two maidservants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. <sup>23</sup>He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. <sup>24</sup>Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wres-

tled with him until the breaking of day. <sup>25</sup>Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. <sup>26</sup>And He said, “Let Me go, for the day breaks.” But he said, “I will not let You go unless You bless me!” <sup>27</sup>So He said to him, “What is your name?” He said, “Jacob.” <sup>28</sup>And He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

<sup>1</sup>Now Jacob lifted his eyes and

94

looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. <sup>2</sup>And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel

and Joseph last. <sup>3</sup>Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. <sup>4</sup>But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

## Seeking God’s Face

**“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart”** (Jeremiah 29:13). **“For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened”** (Matthew 7:8). Jacob finally realized that he *had* to have the blessing of God; he could no longer live by his own schemes. God changed his name from *Jacob*, which means “schemer” or “supplanter,” to *Israel*, which means “Prince with God.” Because Jacob came to the end of himself and sought God *fully*, God blessed him. God’s touch left Jacob with a limp—a weakness that could remind him in time to come that his strength was in God only, not in himself.

Paul, the apostle, also had a weakness—a thorn in the flesh. He asked God three times to remove it. **“And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.... For when I am weak, then I am strong”** (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

## First Be Reconciled

Jacob was on his way back to Bethel, but before he could truly worship and serve God, he needed to be reconciled with his brother. **“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something**

95

against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. **First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”** (Matthew 5:23-24).

What a beautiful picture of reconciliation! Jacob was truly humble before his brother, as he bowed to him seven times. How wonderfully God had prepared Esau’s heart to receive his brother. **“When a man’s ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him”** (Proverbs 16:7). **“He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me”** (Psalm 18:17).



## STORY 33. JACOB RETURNS TO BETHEL

Genesis 35:1-7

<sup>1</sup>Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.” <sup>2</sup>And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. <sup>3</sup>Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me

in the way which I have gone.” <sup>4</sup>So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem.... <sup>5</sup>So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him. <sup>6</sup>And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.

96

## Something to Think About

Jacob had earlier vowed to return to Bethel if God provided for him (Genesis 28:20-22). But he did not return immediately. On the way he stopped at Shechem and settled down. What happened there brought his name into disrepute. (Read Genesis chapter 34.) Now God clearly commands Jacob to go to Bethel and live there and make an altar there to God. It was a call for repentance.

Jesus once said to the church at Ephesus: **“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works”** (Revelation 2:4-5a). Jacob now rose to the spiritual leadership of his family. All the false gods were put away. His family purified themselves and changed their clothes. When they came to Beth-el (“the house of God”), Jacob built an altar to the Lord named “El-beth-el,” meaning “The God of the house of God.” While it is good to go to the house of God, it is better to know God Himself. Are you teaching your family *about* God or to know God Himself? We need to lead our families in worship of God and in personal surrender of ourselves as living sacrifices to Him. What kind of “idols” does your family need to put away? Return to the place where God is your first love.



**“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”** (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

97

## STORY 34. RACHEL DIES IN BETHLEHEM

Genesis 35:16-19

<sup>16</sup>Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel travailed in childbirth, and she had hard labor.

<sup>17</sup>Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not

fear; you will have this son also."

<sup>18</sup>And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

<sup>19</sup>So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

### Special Events in Bethlehem

Rachel's outward beauty had probably been a spiritual handicap to her. When she left her father's home, she brought his gods with her. Now they were put away. She had wrestled with her sister, but the barrenness God brought to her led her to seek God. When God heard her prayer, Joseph was born. Her faith in God led her to name him "Joseph," meaning "Added," because of her strong faith that God would later add to her yet another son. But, sadly, she dies at the birth of that second son, Benjamin.

Bethlehem, where Rachel died, was the town where later Ruth and Boaz would meet and raise their son, Obed—grandfather of David the king. David as a shepherd boy sang psalms to the Lord on the hills of Bethlehem. Hundreds of years later, Mary and Joseph would come to Bethlehem, the city of David, where Jesus the Savior was born. Sadness for Bethlehem accompanied Jesus' birth as Herod commanded all children two years old and under to be killed. "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they were no more' " (Matthew 2:17-18).

98

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

## STORY 35. JOSEPH, THE FAVORED SON

Genesis 37:1-8, 12-14a, 17-28, 31-35

<sup>1</sup>Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. <sup>2</sup>This is the genealogy of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father. <sup>3</sup>Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of many colors. <sup>4</sup>But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.

<sup>5</sup>Now Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers; and they hated him even more. <sup>6</sup>So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: <sup>7</sup>There we were,



binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf." <sup>8</sup>And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

<sup>12</sup>Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. <sup>13</sup>And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, I will send you to them."

99

So he said to him, "Here I am."

<sup>14</sup>Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me." <sup>17</sup>...So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.

<sup>18</sup>Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him. <sup>19</sup>Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming! <sup>20</sup>Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!" <sup>21</sup>But Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him." <sup>22</sup>And Reuben said to them, "Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit which is in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him"—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

<sup>23</sup>So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of many colors that was on him. <sup>24</sup>Then they

took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit was empty; there was no water in it. <sup>25</sup>And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry them down to Egypt. <sup>26</sup>So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? <sup>27</sup>Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh." And his brothers listened.

<sup>28</sup>Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of



100

silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

<sup>31</sup>So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. <sup>32</sup>Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and they brought it to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son's tunic or not?" <sup>33</sup>And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild

beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces."

<sup>34</sup>Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. <sup>35</sup>And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

### Joseph Is Hated by His Brothers

God describes the creation of the vast universe in one short sentence: "He made the stars also" (Genesis 1:16). Yet God devotes one-fourth of the book of Genesis to the story of one man—Joseph. One person who lives a godly life is important to God. You, too, are chosen by God to become like His son Jesus just as Joseph was like Christ throughout all his trials.

We will see just how much like Jesus Joseph was. God revealed His purpose for Joseph through two dreams. Joseph's brothers hated him because of it. Because he did what was right, and they did not, they hated him. Because their father placed his special approval upon Joseph, they hated him. Jesus, too, went about His heavenly Father's business even as a boy. Both Jesus and Joseph were loved by their fathers and sent on a mission where they were not received. "He [Jesus] came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). "They hated Me without a cause" (John 15:25b).

Joseph was a shepherd, while Jesus was known as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). Both Joseph and Jesus were stripped of their robes and falsely accused. Both were taken

101



to Egypt—Jesus as a baby to escape Herod’s wrath. Both were sold for the price of a slave. Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver—the regular price of a slave. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver—the price of a deformed or handicapped slave. What a humiliation! Yet God was preparing Joseph for greatness. **“Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant”** (Mark 10:43b). Both Jesus and Joseph left places of great honor in their father’s house to become servants in a foreign land.

**“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men”** (Philippians 2:5-7). How are you serving others? If you are going through a humbling experience right now, remember Jesus. **“For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls”** (Hebrews 12:3).

Remember, too, that God will exalt you in due time. And He is always with you to comfort you in the midst of any trial. **“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”** (1 Peter 5:6-7).

Jesus says, **“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you”** (John 20:21b). We cannot expect any better treatment than Joseph or Jesus received. **“If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...”** (John 15:20b). But we can have the peace that comes from knowing that God is with us and that He is working out His purpose in and through us. **“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”** (Romans 8:18). There is coming a day when we shall reign with Him.

102

## STORY 36. JOSEPH IS TEMPTED

Genesis 39:1-4, 6-8, 9-12, 16-22a, 23b

<sup>1</sup>Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. <sup>2</sup>The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. <sup>3</sup>And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. <sup>4</sup>So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put in his hand. <sup>5</sup>... And Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. <sup>6</sup>And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.” <sup>7</sup>But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master ... has committed all that he has to my hand. <sup>8</sup>... How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” <sup>9</sup>So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. <sup>10</sup>But it happened about this time, when Joseph

went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, <sup>11</sup>that she caught him by his garment, saying, “Lie with me.” But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.

<sup>12</sup>So she kept his garment with her until his master came home. <sup>13</sup>Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, “The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me; <sup>14</sup>so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside.” <sup>15</sup>So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him...that his anger was aroused. <sup>16</sup>Then Joseph’s master



103

took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison. <sup>21</sup>But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the

keeper of the prison. <sup>22</sup>And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; <sup>23</sup>because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

### Something to Think About

**“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it”** (1 Corinthians 10:13). Joseph’s way of escape was to physically *run* from the temptation. What a shining example of victory over temptation! **“For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God”** (1 Peter 2:20).

**“But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed”** (1 Peter 3:14-16).

Jesus also was tempted, but did not yield. **“For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted”** (Hebrews 2:18).

**“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need”** (Hebrews 4:15-16).

104

### Joseph Served God in Prison

Joseph was given much responsibility in prison and the Lord prospered *everything* he did. During the years while he was in prison, the Lord helped him to interpret the dreams of two fellow-prisoners (Genesis chapter 40). Both interpretations came true. Pharaoh hanged his chief baker, but he restored the chief butler to his former position.

Joseph asked the chief butler to make mention of him to Pharaoh when he was restored. But the chief butler did not remember Joseph. He forgot him. *Two years later*, Pharaoh had two dreams which no one could interpret. At that time, the chief butler remembered Joseph as being one who could interpret dreams, so Pharaoh sent for him. **“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart”** (Galatians 6:9).

## STORY 37. JOSEPH BECOMES RULER OF EGYPT

Genesis 41:14-40, 42, 46-54

<sup>14</sup>Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh. <sup>15</sup>And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I have dreamed a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.” <sup>16</sup>So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace.”

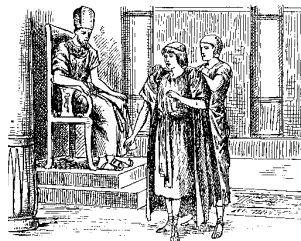
<sup>17</sup>Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: “Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river. <sup>18</sup>Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow. <sup>19</sup>Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup>And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. <sup>21</sup>When they had eaten them up, no one would have

105

known that they had eaten them, for they were just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke.

<sup>22</sup>Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good. <sup>23</sup>Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them. <sup>24</sup>And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads. So I told this to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me." <sup>25</sup>Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, "The dreams of Pharaoh are one; God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do: <sup>26</sup>The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads are seven years; the dreams are one. <sup>27</sup>And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine. <sup>28</sup>This is the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do. <sup>29</sup>Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; <sup>30</sup>but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the

famine will deplete the land. <sup>31</sup>So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it will be very severe. <sup>32</sup>And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. <sup>33</sup>"Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt. <sup>34</sup>Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. <sup>35</sup>And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. <sup>36</sup>Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine." <sup>37</sup>So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. <sup>38</sup>And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?" <sup>39</sup>Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown



you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. <sup>40</sup>You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you." <sup>42</sup>Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck.

<sup>46</sup>Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. <sup>47</sup>Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly. <sup>48</sup>So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in

every city the food of the fields which surrounded them. <sup>49</sup>Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for it was without number. <sup>50</sup>And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. <sup>51</sup>Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house." <sup>52</sup>And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." <sup>53</sup>Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended, <sup>54</sup>and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said. The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

Genesis 42:1-3

<sup>1</sup>When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?" <sup>2</sup>And he said, "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die." <sup>3</sup>So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.

### Something to Think About

Like Joseph, Jesus began His public ministry when He was 30 years old. And just as Joseph was exalted to a high position after his time of suffering, Jesus also is exalted to His rightful place. **"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Philippians 2:8-11).

**"He shall judge between the nations, and shall rebuke many people;...nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore"** (Isaiah 2:4).

At one time Joseph's brothers said, **"Shall you indeed reign over us? or shall you indeed have dominion over us?"** (Genesis 37:8). In a parable, Jesus revealed that this was the attitude the Jewish leaders had at that time toward Him. **"We will not have this man to reign over us"** (Luke 19:14b). But all the kingdoms of the world are going to become the kingdoms of Christ, **"and He shall reign for ever and ever!"** (Revelation 11:15b).

Have you accepted Jesus as Lord over your life? Have you submitted to His rule? **"This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us"** (2 Timothy 2:11-12).

If we are among the redeemed, there is coming a day when we shall reign with Him (Revelation 5:9-10). **"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne"** (Revelation 3:21).

### STORY 38. JOSEPH FORGIVES HIS BROTHERS

We have not space enough to tell the whole story of how Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for food during the years of famine and how Joseph tested them to see if their wicked hearts had changed. He found that they *had* repented of their sin toward him and that they now loved his younger brother Benjamin to the point of being willing to give their lives for him. (This story is in Genesis chapters 42-44.)

Because of this change of attitude, Joseph decided to reveal himself to his brothers and to become reconciled to them. How surprised they were to find out that their brother was still alive!



Genesis 45:1-11, 14-15

<sup>1</sup>Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. <sup>2</sup>And he

wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it.

<sup>3</sup>Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; does my father still live?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence. <sup>4</sup>And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." And they came near. And he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup>But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. <sup>6</sup>For these two years the famine has been in the land, and there are still five years in which there will be nei-

ther plowing nor harvesting.  
<sup>7</sup>And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. <sup>8</sup>So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>"Hasten and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph: "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry. <sup>10</sup>You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me.... <sup>11</sup>There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for there are still five years of famine.'" <sup>14</sup>Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. <sup>15</sup>Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

Genesis 47:28; 50:15, 18-22  
<sup>28</sup>And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.  
<sup>15</sup>When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."  
<sup>18</sup>Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."  
<sup>19</sup>Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup>But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. <sup>21</sup>Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. <sup>22</sup>So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household. And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.

### Joseph Finds God's Purpose for His Life

The dreams God had given Joseph as a boy surely must have helped him to realize God's future purpose for him. He trusted that God had a plan. This helped him to be able to forgive his brothers. We know he had already forgiven them because he named his first-born son Manasseh, which

110

means "Forgetting." He had decided to put the past behind him. **"But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"** (Philippians 3:13b-14).

Because of Joseph's forgiving and forgetting spirit, God could bless him. Joseph named his second son "Ephraim," meaning *"Double fruit."* What a wonderful thing it is to see God's hand in all the circumstances around us, enabling us to fit into His plan with forgiveness and contentment! Jesus, too, forgave those who crucified Him. He realized that they did not really understand what they were doing.

Through all his trials, Joseph was being conformed into the image of Christ: **"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren"** (Romans 8:28-29).

As Joseph tested the attitudes of his brothers, Jesus tests our attitudes toward Him by seeing how much we love one another. **"If you love Me, keep My commandments. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you"** (John 14:15; 15:12). If we love Him, He will reveal Himself to us, forgive us, and nourish us—just as Joseph forgave and cared for his brothers.

God is preparing you, too, for the great purpose He has for you in life. **"Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"** (Esther 4:14b). Let us each be the person God wants us to be right where we are, so that He can use us in His great kingdom.

### Something to Do

Memorize Genesis 50:20.

111

### INDEX TO MAIN TOPICS

<p>ABRAM, pages 40-55  called, 40-42  and Lot, 45-48  covenant, 49-52, 54-55  ABRAHAM, 57-61, 68-73  intercedes, 57-61  friend of God, 60-61  faith tested, 68-70  seeks wife for Isaac, 70-73  ADAM, 15-16  ANGER, dealing with, 27-29  ARK OF SAFETY, 37-38  ARMOR OF GOD, 48  ABEL, 39  BETHEL, 80-81, 96-97  BETHLEHEM, 98-99  CAIN and ABEL, 25-26  CHASTENING, 88  CIRCUMCISION, 54-57  COVENANT, 49-52, 54-55  CREATION, 1-14  CROSS OF CHRIST, 8, 70  ELIEZER, 70-73  EMPLOYEES, 90-91  ENOCH, 30-31  ESAU, 74-80, 92, 95-96  FAITH, 41-42, 52, 65, 68-70  FLOOD, 35-37  FORGIVENESS, 109-110  FRUITFULNESS, 11-12, 111  GUIDANCE, 72  HAGAR, 53-54, 65-66, 68  ISAAC, 64-71, 73-79  ISHMAEL, 53-54, 65-68  JACOB, 74-84, 86-97  bargains for birthright, 74, 76  deceives for blessing, 76-80  dream at Bethel, 80-81  serves for Rachel, 82-83  family troubles, 83-94  wrestles with God, 94-95  JACOB'S SONS, 86-89</p>	<p>JESUS, 52  present/seen in creation, 5-14  coming again, 31, 34  ark of safety, 37-38  priest-king like Melchizedek, 49  seen in Isaac, 70  way to heaven, 81  came as a servant, 82-83  seen in Joseph, 101-102, 104, 108  JOSEPH, 87, 89, 99-111  favored son/hated brother, 99-102  tempted, 103-104  as prisoner/ruler, 104-108  forgives/finds purpose, 109-111  JUDGMENT, 33-35  LEAH, 84-87  LOT, 45-48  MARRIAGE, 16-17, 45, 72, 79  MELCHIZEDEK, 47, 49  METHUSELAH, 30-31  NOAH, 32-38  PRAYER, 59-60, 72, 93-95  PRIDE, 39-40  PROMISES, 5-6, 42, 51, 58-59, 65, 94  PROVISION, 15-16, 68-69  RACHEL, 82-83, 86-89, 98  REAPING WHAT WE SOW, 83-84  REBEKAH, 71-75, 77-79  RECONCILIATION, 95-96  REDEMPTION, 21-22, 27  REPENTANCE, 46, 79-80, 97  REST, 13-14  RESURRECTION, 9-10, 70  SARA/SARAH, 43, 45, 58-59, 64-65  SATAN, 18-20; resisting, 23-25, 52  SIN, consequences, 18-21, 44, 63-64  putting off, 7, 44, 55-57, 64, 66-68  SODOM/GOMORRAH, 61-62  SPIRITUAL WARFARE, 42, 48-49, 66-68  SUFFERING for righteousness, 26-27  TEMPTATION, 63-64, 103-104  WALKING WITH GOD, 30-31</p>
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### Answers to Questions

The answers to the questions in this Bible study on Genesis are found below so that you can check your work and know the correct answers. Refer to this page *only after* you have answered all the questions.

#### Pages 3-4

1. hovering, light, light, darkness
2. firmament, waters, waters
3. dry land, grass, herb, fruit tree
4. lights, day, night, stars, signs, seasons, days, years
5. sea creatures, living thing, birds
6. beast, cattle, creeps, man, God, good
7. ended, rested

#### Pages 15-16

1. garden, Eden
2. tend, keep
3. every, freely, knowledge, good, evil, die
4. ribs, woman

#### Pages 32-33

1. wickedness, intent, continually, violence
2. sorry, grieved
3. grace, just, perfect, walked
4. all

#### Page 42

1. nation
2. bless
3. name
4. blessing
5. bless, bless
6. curse, curses
7. families, blessed

#### Pages 74-75

1. pleaded, wife, barren, conceived
2. 40, 60, 20
3. struggled, inquire, nations, older, younger
4. Esau, ate, game
5. Jacob, mild, tents, hunter, field

#### Page 89

1. Reuben
2. Simeon
3. Levi
4. Judah
5. Dan
6. Naphtali
7. Gad
8. Asher
9. Issachar
10. Zebulun
11. Joseph
12. Benjamin

**"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart"** (Jeremiah 29:13).



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Original cover art by Edwin B. Wallace

5-05

**2018/2 English**