



The Summit
Green Campus of Canton Baptist Temple

Resources for Your Life

Genesis
56 Sessions

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Resource Guide

This resource was compiled from the personal Bible study and blog entries created by Tom Hogsed, pastor of the Summit in Green. You can find the original blog entries at www.tomhogsed.com.

The **introduction** to this book has been written so the reader has a better understanding of the Biblical author, his purpose in writing, and important points to understand before reading.

Following the introduction, each new page represents a **verse by verse overview** of the Scripture passage. The best way to study is to first read the Scripture verses from your Bible relying on the Holy Spirit to provide understanding and then to support your understanding with the commentary written below.

At the end of each Scripture commentary, there is a short **prayer** written so the reader can personally apply what has been discovered; however, it is suggested that you also pray from your heart in response to God's Word.

Feel free to make your own personal notes in your Bible, on this page, or even in a journal.

If this resource has helped you or you have further questions, please send an e-mail to tomhogsed@gmail.com.

Introduction to Genesis

Genesis is often referred to as the book of beginnings because it provides an extensive explanation of the origins of the human race, the created universe, and the birth of the nation of Israel. Written by the hands of Moses somewhere between 1445-1405 BC, these words were given to him by special revelation from God (2 Timothy 3:16) since Moses was born nearly three centuries after the events of Genesis were completed. These words would give Israel, God's chosen people, an understanding of the history and theology of their existence. This book is foundational to all of Scripture and without a proper understanding of it, many other parts of the Bible may be misunderstood (marriage, family, sin, forgiveness, government, judgment, languages/people groups). In the pages of this first book of the Bible, the reader discovers significant explanations to events such as the creation of the universe, origin of the human race, relationship between God and man, sin and death, and the unveiling of God's plan to save mankind from the penalty of sin (3:15). The events of Genesis occur in three distinct locations: Mesopotamia (Genesis 1-11, creation-2090 BC), the Promised Land of Canaan (Genesis 12-36, 2090-1897 BC), and Egypt (Genesis 37-50, 1897-1805 BC).

Although Moses never argues for the existence of God in this first book of the Bible, he clearly distinguishes Him as the one, true God over all other gods created in the minds of wicked men. There is an obvious battle occurring throughout Genesis between the evil forces of Satan (a fallen angel) and the all-powerful forces of God. Satan repeatedly attempts to destroy mankind by tempting them to disobey God's ways and worship false deities. God fights for the hearts and minds of mankind seeking to lead them to a life of blessing and reward. This struggle between good and evil is evident on every page of Genesis as the reader witnesses the beginnings of God's redemptive plan to save mankind from the penalty of sin by using the nation of Israel to bring forth a Deliverer, Jesus Christ.

Dear God, thank You for providing written details concerning the beginnings of the universe and the creation of mankind. As I read the words of this book, may I be challenged to live a life of obedience to your ways and resist the forces of evil around me.

Genesis 1:1-31

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). This verse has been read countless times since Moses wrote these very first words of recorded Scripture. Moses never argues for the existence of an eternal God, but simply assumes people will have faith that He exists and has always existed (Psalm 90:2). Although God is eternal, Moses explains that everything else was created by this eternal God out of nothing; in other words, God spoke into existence all created things without having any other materials. This supernatural creation occurred over a period of six literal 24 hour days. Here is a brief summary of what was created on each day.

Day 1 (Genesis 1:1-5, heavens and earth) - The heavens refers to what we understand to be outer space. God also creates the earth. The earth is created in conjunction with water but it is created dark, uninhabited, and without shape (1:2). God the Holy Spirit can also be seen participating in creation (1:2b). Even though Moses does not mention Him by name, Paul later reveals that Jesus Christ, being God, also participated in creation (Colossians 1:16). On this first day, God created light and separated it from darkness calling the light "Day" and the darkness "Night" (1:3-4). The sun and moon were not created until day 4, so it must be understood that God was the source of this light (Revelation 21:23).

Day 2 (Genesis 1:6-8, sky) God created the sky to divide the heavens (outer space) and the earth.

Day 3 (Genesis 1:9-13, dry land and plants) Water was gathered together into one place and dry land stood above the water (1:9-10). God then decorated the dry land with self-sustaining plant life (1:11-12)

Day 4 (Genesis 1:14-19, sun, moon, and stars) God created two great sources of light. The sun became the primary source of light and the moon reflects the light of the sun at night (1:15-18). The stars also provided light at night (1:16b). The sun, moon, and stars also helped mark the seasons and calendar (1:14).

Day 5 (Genesis 1:20-23, sea life and flying creatures) Both sea life and flying creatures are made with the ability to reproduce their own kind (1:22)

Day 6 (Genesis 1:24-31, land animals and man) Land animals were created (1:24-25) and then the triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) decided to create man in His image so that he could rule over all of creation (1:26). Man is unique in God's creation because he was fashioned in God's image, meaning that he possesses His communicable attributes such as intellect, emotion, will, love, and morality; therefore, man could have fellowship with God, which distinguished him from all of God's other created things. God created male and female and commanded them to reproduce (1:28). Their reproduction would fill the earth with people, who would rule over God's creation. God then makes it clear that man should take plants and fruit for food, making His initial creation vegetarians (1:29-30).

After these six days of creation were complete, God looked upon everything He had created and declared it "very good" (1:31).

Dear God, thank You for preserving a record of Your miraculous creation. May it cause me to continually worship You alone as the all-powerful Creator.

Genesis 2:1-17

In the very first words of Scripture, Moses documents the origin of all created things so that people from every generation would understand the beginnings of the world in which they lived. Moses identifies the eternal God as the Creator (1:1) who caused all things to exist through spoken word (1:1-31). Although Moses never argues for God's existence, he simply assumes that those reading would believe in the one, true God who created the heavens and the earth in six literal days. Genesis 1 concludes with God creating man (His most prized creation) in His image which meant that man had a unique relationship with God (1:26-27). Man was entrusted with overseeing God's creation as well as populating the earth through having children with his wife, Eve (1:26-28).

God completed all of His creation in six literal days (2:1) and on the seventh day He rested from all the work He had done (2:2). His rest was not a result of exhaustion, but rather to set a pattern for man's work cycle. Man would work six days, but set aside the seventh day for rest (2:3). This day of rest became known as the Sabbath and would later be constituted as a day of worship (Exodus 20:8-11).

Beginning in Genesis 2:4, Moses fills in the details of creation especially concerning the events of day 6 when man was created. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit he writes, "Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's nostrils, and the man became a living person" (2:7). God formed man's body from the dirt, but what gave him value and worth was the breath of life which made him a living being or a living soul. This made man a spiritual being capable of having a meaningful relationship with God. After God created Adam, He placed him into the garden of Eden and surrounded him with beauty and pleasantries (2:8-9a). Even though there were probably numerous trees in the garden, Moses mentions two of them. The first tree is called the tree of life and eating its fruit would miraculously sustain life (2:9b). See Revelation 22:2, 14 for a comparable tree which will be located in the new heavens and earth. Also found in the garden was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:9c). Anyone who would eat of this tree would experience death as punishment (2:16-17). Death carries the idea of being separated from God in fellowship and also implies a delayed, but assured physical death. No reason is given for prohibiting man from eating this tree, so it is best understood that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was placed in the garden as a test of man's obedience. The keys to life and death were set before Adam and Eve. Obeying God would bring life and blessing. Disobedience would result in death and eternal separation from God. Thousands of years later, not much has changed. Obedience still brings reward. Disobedience still brings retribution.

Dear God, open my eyes to the reward of obedience and the dangers of disobedience.

Genesis 2:18-25

God wanted His people as well as all generations to understand the origin of the world in which they lived, so He provided the details to Moses who wrote the words found in Genesis 1. The Creator God spoke all things into existence in six literal days and then rested on the seventh day. God's six days of work and one day of rest became a pattern for man's work cycle (2:1-3). The second chapter of Genesis provides further details of the sixth day of creation when man and animals were created. After breathing the breath of life into the man (2:7), God placed him in the garden of Eden (a perfect environment) where he tended and kept the garden (2:8, 15). Although God gave the man freedom to eat from all trees in the garden, He put one restriction on him. The man was not permitted to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:9). If man disobeyed God's command and ate from the tree, he would lose his fellowship with God and eventually experience physical death as a consequence (2:16-17).

On the sixth day, God reflected on His creation and found that it was incomplete. Even though man was created to have a relationship with God, The Creator desired for man to experience a meaningful relationship with someone comparable to him (2:18). Moses records God's thoughts in regards to man's incompleteness, "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him*" (2:18, NKJV). Man's counterpart was created for companionship and as an equal. She was would enable man to fulfill God's command to fill the earth and have dominion over it (1:27-28). Without woman, man would experience loneliness and God wanted to make sure this need was met. Man's need of a companion was further emphasized as God commanded him to name each of the animals (2:19-20a), but not one of them was comparable to him (2:20b). God then caused a deep sleep to fall over Adam and using one of his ribs, God formed woman out of the man (2:21-23). When both the male and female were created, God established the marital relationship between them and set the foundation for all future marriages. A natural reading of Genesis 2:24 reveals that a marriage relationship is defined as one man and one woman leaving their family and becoming joined together as one. This joining together was meant to be permanent and complete. Moses also mentions the fact that Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed (2:25). Because sin had not entered into the world, there was no need for man or woman to be ashamed of their bodies; in fact, they were completely comfortable with each other and would find complete satisfaction sexually, emotionally, and spiritually. Adam and Eve were completely delighted in their union with each other and with their Creator. This time must have been beautiful.

Dear God, thank You for creating man and woman to be joined together so that they can find satisfaction in their relationship. Although sin has now entered into the world, may those who are married find help from You to endure struggles and find companionship in each other.

Genesis 3:1-5

God's creation of the heavens and the earth had been completed (Genesis 1) but Moses provided further details surrounding man's creation (Genesis 2), which occurred on day six. Adam had been created from the dust of the ground (2:7) and Eve was fashioned from the rib of the man (2:21-23). Together they formed the first marriage (2:24-25) and dwelt in a perfect environment called the garden of Eden (2:8-15). Although God gave Adam and Eve complete freedom in the garden (2:16), He did prohibit them from eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17a). Eating of this tree would result in loss of fellowship with God and physical death (2:17b). There is a dramatic occurrence in Genesis 3 when a snake appears to Eve while she is alone in the garden (3:1). In the New Testament, both John and Paul identify the serpent as Satan (Revelation 12:9; 20:2; 2 Corinthians 11:3). Since Satan was an angel, he was able to possess the body of the snake. Scripture does not give a lot of details surrounding Satan's rebellion against God, but many believe it occurred after Genesis 1:31 when God referred to His creation as very good, but prior to this incident in Genesis 3. Ezekiel 28:11-16 reveals that Satan was a beautiful angelic being whose home was the garden of Eden (Ezekiel 28:12-13). Satan was an anointed cherub who guarded God's throne and had complete access to Him (Ezekiel 28:14) until sin was found in him (Ezekiel 28:15-16). Satan's sin of pride (1 Timothy 3:6) forced God to remove him from heaven. Isaiah 14:12-15 further describes Satan's (Lucifer) demise and his attempt to remove God from His rightful throne by overtaking the universe.

His attempt to take over the universe began by appearing to Eve when she was without the protection of her husband and alone in the garden. Satan worked deceitfully by causing her to question God's command to not eat of the tree (3:1). It is obvious that Eve knew the commandment God had given as well as the punishment for disobeying (3:2-3); however, Satan decided to employ blatant lies to get her to eat of the tree. Satan said, "You won't die! God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil" (3:4-5). In essence, Satan was informing Eve that God was jealous and withholding something from her by prohibiting them to eat from the tree. Even though Eve had no reason to question God's goodness, Satan placed doubt in her mind by promising great benefit if she would eat from the tree. Satan's tactics are still the same today. He lies, offers a benefit to sin, and then watches as people struggle with the choice. "He [Satan] was a murderer from the beginning. He has always hated the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

Dear God, each day help me see the lies of Satan so I can walk in the truth.

Genesis 3:6-13

Satan, who was a fallen angel, was attempting to remove God from His rightful throne by overtaking the universe and destroying His most prized creation, man. The eternal God had called into existence the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1) and then created human beings to rule over His creation and fill the earth with people (1:26-28). Not only was man created with a unique relationship with creation, but also a unique relationship with God. After breathing the breath of life into man (2:7), God placed Adam in the garden and gave him a command to abstain from eating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:15-17). If he would disobey God and eat from this tree, he would experience death as punishment (2:17).

Although no reason is given for prohibiting the fruit from this tree, it is best understood as a test of Adam and Eve's obedience to God. Satan was well aware of God's command and sought out Eve while she was alone. He took on the form of a serpent and began calling into question the very words of God causing Eve to doubt God's goodness and motives (3:1-5). "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" (3:6). The apostle Paul later reveals that through Adam's action, "...sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:15). This first disobedience made all men sinners by nature and caused spiritual death to fall on every human being. Sin has continually made it impossible for man to find fellowship with God.

As soon as Adam and Eve ate from the tree, "...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" (3:7).

Attempting to cover their bodies was man's first effort to relieve the guilt and shame from disobeying God. When they heard God walking in the garden, they hid themselves but God called out to them and Adam responded by saying that they were hiding because they were naked (3:8-10). God then questioned them to see if they had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (3:11). Adam, the first to speak, blamed Eve for his disobedience (3:12) and Eve, in turn, blamed the serpent (3:13).

Neither Adam nor Eve wanted to admit their sin, so they blamed each other. The refusal to acknowledge their sin would withhold forgiveness since God would soon establish repentance as a necessary element in avoiding judgment. Confessing sin is the key to mercy. "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

Dear God, help me to admit when I'm wrong so that I can experience Your mercy and forgiveness.

Genesis 3:14-15

Genesis, known as the book of beginnings, has provided Israel as well as every generation answers concerning the origins of the heavens and the earth (1:1-31). Within the framework of creation, God created man from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life (2:7). God also commanded Adam and Eve to rule over His creation and fill the earth with people (1:26-28). They lived in a place called the garden of Eden where God gave them freedom to eat from every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:15-17). Eating from this tree was punishable by death (2:17). Satan (a fallen angel), who was seeking to overthrow God and destroy man, tempted Eve to eat from the tree and she ate (3:1-6). Eve gave fruit from the tree to her husband, Adam, and he also ate (3:6) bringing sin and death into the entire human race (Romans 5:12).

Because of their disobedience, God cursed each individual involved in bringing sin into the world. God cursed the physical serpent by causing it to slither on its belly (3:14). It is likely that serpents had legs when they were created, but as a result of sin it was made to crawl on its belly and become one of the most feared creatures in the world. The next curse was given to the spiritual serpent, Satan. Moses writes, "And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15). In the midst of hopelessness and despair over sin, God gives what is known as the first gospel (good news). He promised that the woman's offspring would strike the head of Satan, indicating that this One (Jesus Christ) would eventually deliver a fatal blow to destroy sin and death. The words written here indicate that the struggle between Satan's offspring (those who oppose God) and the offspring of the woman (a descendant of Eve/Jesus and those who follow Him) would not be easy; in fact, God warns that Satan will strike the heel of the woman's offspring, meaning that he will cause this One (Jesus) to suffer. This reference to suffering is a foreshadowing of Satan's role in having Jesus put to death in an attempt to prevent forgiveness of sin; however, Jesus' death was not fatal because He resurrected from the dead three days later and guaranteed eternal life for those who believe in Him.

Dear God, thank You for the promise of deliverance from sin and sending Your only Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for sin.

Genesis 3:16-24

Adam and Eve had disobeyed God's command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (3:6). Their disobedience was punishable by death and eternal separation from God (2:16-17), but God provided a glimmer of hope in the midst of this chaotic situation. God promises to send a deliverer to the world who would destroy the works of Satan and the sin which resulted from man's disobedience (3:15).

Although this promised deliverer (Jesus Christ) would be put to death through the works of Satan, Jesus' death was a part of God's plan for Him to be a sacrifice for the sins of men (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was then victorious by resurrecting from the dead and securing a future resurrection for those who would believe in His death for sin (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Even though there is a future hope of redemption and forgiveness, man and woman would now experience a world which included suffering. Woman would experience pain in childbirth to remind her that she is giving birth to a sinful child (3:16). Woman would also suffer conflict in the relationship with her husband and would need God's help to find harmony (3:16). Man was cursed for heeding the voice of his wife and eating from the forbidden tree (3:17).

Rather than obeying the voice of God, Adam obeyed the voice of his wife which brought about difficulty in his work (3:17-18) and eventual death (3:19). Adam did not die immediately, but would live a life of hardship and sufferings because of sin.

After God cursed all those involved in bringing sin into the world, the first physical death takes place.

Even though the man and woman should have been put to death to relieve the guilt and shame of sin, God sacrificed an animal in their place (3:21). He clothed them with the skin of the animal, which would be a constant reminder that death is necessary to pay for sin; however, the death of this animal also symbolized a future hope that God would kill a substitute in order to pay for the sins of men. In a concluding act of mercy, God removed Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden so that they would not eat from the tree of life and live forever in a state of sin (3:22-24). Although man and woman had disobeyed God's command, He loved them so much that He gave them hope of a future redemption.

Dear God, Your mercy endures forever and extends to all who will believe. For this, I thank You.

Genesis 4:1-26

After Adam and Eve sinned, they were removed from the garden of Eden so that their lives would not be sustained forever by eating from the tree of life (3:22-24). They would now be exposed to pain, suffering, and death as a result of their disobedience; however, God promised that He would send a Deliverer to save them from the penalty of sin (3:15). The story of God sending a Savior to deliver people from sin is the one story of the Bible. Every page of Scripture points to the redemption of mankind through this Promised One.

Adam and Eve conceived two sons, Cain and Abel (4:1-2). Some believe that they were twins since there is no apparent time lapse between Genesis 4:1 and Genesis 4:2. Abel eventually became a shepherd and Cain was a farmer (4:2b). Moses focuses on an event in their lives which describes their relationship with each other as well as their relationship with God. Cain brings an offering of fruit to the Lord (4:3), but Abel brings his best animal to offer to the Lord (4:4). Although the reader is not provided much detail, the Lord accepts Abel's offering but rejects Cain's (4:5). It must be assumed that Abel brought an offering in obedience to God's prescribed commands while Cain simply brought things according to his own will. Cain became angry at God, who reminded him that his offering would have been acceptable if it would have been offered in obedience (4:6-7). Scripture does not record a response from Cain, but it does reveal that Cain became so angry that he murdered his brother, Abel (4:8). God confronts Cain regarding the murder of his brother, but he acted as if he did not know what had happened to Abel (4:9-10). God knew the truth, so He cursed the ground Cain would till (4:11-12a) and revealed that he would be a lifelong fugitive (4:12b). Cain was overwhelmed by God's punishment upon his life (4:13-15) and begged Him to spare his life from those who would try to murder him (4:14), so God promised to protect him from murderers (4:15). Cain leaves the presence of God (4:16) and Moses documents his descendants (4:17-24).

In the midst of this chaos, Adam and Eve conceived another child whom they named Seth (4:25a). Since Cain was now removed from the family blessing and Abel was dead, Seth became Eve's hope as the one who would bring forth the deliverer (4:25b). According to Luke 3:38, the line of Seth eventually brought forth this deliverer, Jesus Christ. God always keeps His promises, even when circumstances seem to be out of His control. Seth established a godly line and "men began to call on the name of the Lord" (4:26). This is the first place in Scripture where men begin to realize their sinfulness and call out to God for help. In order to receive God's mercy, all mankind needs to acknowledge their sinfulness and look to God for forgiveness. Without faith in Him, there is no hope.

Dear God, I am a sinful man in need of Your mercy.

Genesis 5:1-32

Genesis 5:1-32 is a documentation of the genealogy of Adam and connects him with Noah's family, who would be the only ones to survive the upcoming global flood. Rather than mentioning every name in the genealogy, some of the significant points will be highlighted. After 930 years of life, Adam finally died (5:1-5). His death was a fulfillment of the curse for eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:17). Adam's line continued through his son, Seth, who is said to have been created in the human image like his father, Adam (5:5). Through procreation, this same image would be passed to all generations after them.

Toward the end of Genesis 5, a couple events are notable. First, Enoch lived 365 years and during that time he walked with God; however, Enoch did not die like all those before him. Moses writes that Enoch "walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (5:21-24). No details are given surrounding this happening except that Enoch had a close walk with God, so God decided to simply bring him into His presence without first experiencing death. Elijah is the only other example of someone being taken from this earth without experiencing death (2 Kings 2:1-12). Another notable event in this genealogy of Adam is the birth and life of a man named Methuselah who lived 969 years on this earth (5:25-27). For the record, Methuselah lived the longest of anyone else mentioned in the Bible. He was the father of Lamech (5:25), who was the father of Noah (5:28-29). Lamech named his son Noah because he believed that he would "...comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord has cursed" (5:29). Although Lamech did not know exactly how God would use his son, he had faith that God could use him to bring good on the earth. Lamech lived 777 years and he died (5:30-31), but the genealogy of Adam concludes with Noah and his wife giving birth to three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth (5:32). Noah and his family would soon become the focus of what was about to occur on the earth. God was going to preserve and protect the Noahic family through the most devastating judgment the earth had ever experienced.

Dear God, thank You for giving us a record of those who walked with You. May I learn what it means to daily walk in obedience to You.

Genesis 6:1-22

People were living long lives on the earth during this time and as a result there were many children being born (Genesis 5). Along with this population increase (6:1), extreme evil and wickedness prevailed amongst the people (6:5). Part of the sinfulness which characterized mankind at this time was due to the "sons of God" (fallen angels) possessing the bodies of men and procreating with numerous women (6:2). This would result in an entire generation of children who would walk in disobedience to God (6:4). Through the preaching of Enoch and Noah (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5), the Holy Spirit had been urging men to repent and turn from sin (6:3a), but God would only give them 120 years to repent before He brought down judgment (6:3b). The wickedness of people grieved the heart of God (6:6, 11-12) and He determined to destroy all of creation (6:7), except Noah who had found grace in the eyes of God (6:8). Noah was a "...just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God" (6:9).

Because Noah walked in faith and obedience (Hebrews 11:7), God called on him to make an ark (a very large boat) so that his family could survive the coming flood judgment (6:13-17). God then made a covenant with Noah to not only protect his family from the coming judgment, but also to establish a relationship between Noah's family and God (6:18; 9:9-17). They would be able to enjoy a sense of protection and security which resulted from living in obedience to God. God instructed Noah to "bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood" (6:19-20). Bringing a male and female aboard the ark would ensure the preservation of each kind of animal. Noah was also instructed to bring enough food for his family and the animals so that they would be able to survive during the global flood (6:21). Everything God commanded Noah to do, he completed (6:22) and his obedience would eventually save his life and the life of his family. Noah is one of the best examples of a man who ignored what everyone else was doing and chose to obey God. Although he must have felt like an outcast, Noah believed that obeying God was more important than enjoying the pleasures of sin. We need more modern day individuals willing to live like Noah.

Dear God, help me to forgo the pleasures of sin so that I might live life in obedience to God.

Genesis 7:1-24

God commanded Noah and his family to board the ark because they were the only ones on the earth who were "righteous before God in this generation" (7:1). God had seen that the "...wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually" (6:5); therefore, He determined to judge the inhabitants of the earth by sending a global flood (6:13, 17). A covenant was established by God with Noah's family which guaranteed protection from the flood (6:18). God's patience with sinful men had expired (6:3) and the time of judgment had come. Noah was required to bring the following things with him on the ark in order to preserve God's creation following the flood: a male/female of all unclean animals (6:19-20) and seven male/female pairs of clean animals (7:2-3). The extra pairs of clean animals would be used for sacrifice and food (8:20; 9:3).

God revealed to Noah that in seven more days it would begin to rain on the earth and continue for 40 days (7:4). The continual rain would "destroy from the face of the earth all living things that God had made" (7:4). Noah was 600 years old when he began gathering his family and all the animals onto the ark in preparation for the flood to come (7:5-10, 13-16). Moses writes, "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. And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights" (7:11-12). During this 40 days of rain, the waters increased and the ark "rose high above the earth" (7:17) and "moved about on the surface of the waters" (7:18). The highest mountains were approximately 22 feet under water so that the ark could freely float above everything (7:19-20). As a result of this global flood, Moses writes that "all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of the spirit of life, all that *was* on the dry *land*, died. So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who *were* with him in the ark remained *alive*" (7:21-23). This is one of the saddest occurrences in all of Scripture. Although God patiently waited for men to repent, His patience eventually ran out and all mankind was judged according to their works. Those who turn from sin will always find forgiveness with God, but those who continue in their sin will eventually face the wrath of God. "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

Dear God, sin is offensive to You and I pray that it would not have priority in my life.

Genesis 8:1-22

In the short time of mankind's existence, their wickedness had become great and his "heart was only evil continually" (6:5). God, the Creator of the human race (2:7), was extremely sorrowful over man's disobedience and his proneness to corrupt himself through sin (6:6-7, 11-12), so He decided to destroy all mankind from the face of the earth (6:7). However, Noah and his family had been obedient to God and He promised that they would be spared in the upcoming global flood (6:17-18). Noah built an ark to protect his family along with a male and female of each kind of animal (6:19-20). This would ensure that the human as well as the animal population would be able to repopulate the earth following the flood.

God eventually sent the flood and all living things on dry land died (7:22-23). Only those on the ark were preserved (7:23). "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" (8:1). When the ark finally rested (8:4), Noah awaited the land to fully dry before exiting the ark (8:7-14). Before exiting the ark, God commanded them to "be fruitful and multiply on the earth" (8:15-19), which would again fill the earth with people and animals.

Noah's first action upon exiting the ark was an act of worship to God. He built an altar and "took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (8:20). Noah was overwhelmed with God's mercy and protection upon his family so he expressed his joy through an offering to God alone. When God smelled the aroma of sacrifice, He was pleased and promised to never again destroy the earth by a global flood (8:21; 9:11). Although God knew that man's heart would continue to do evil, He comforted Noah by promising to not act in this way again (9:21). This judgment on the earth reminded Noah, as well as all generations, that those who obey God will be blessed while those who disobey Him will be judged. We must allow this concept to settle into our minds and strive to obey God in all things.

Dear God, thank You for reminding me through the story of Noah that You expect obedience.

Genesis 9:1-28

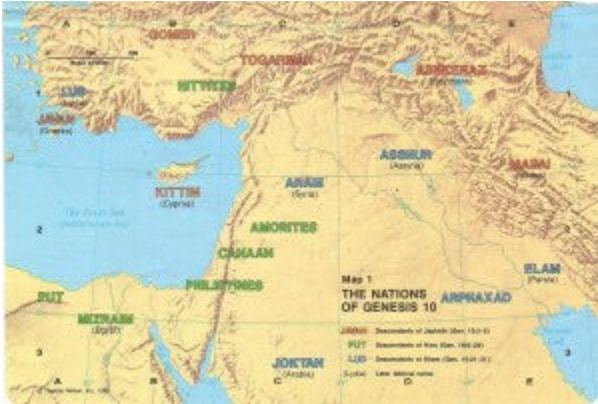
God had completely destroyed mankind from the face of the earth (7:21-23a) because of their continual disobedience (6:5). Only Noah, his wife, three sons, and their wives survived the global flood by boarding an ark (6:17-18) and awaiting the waters to recede (8:1). The flood as well as the drying out period lasted one year and ten days (Genesis 7:11-8:14) and then Noah's family disembarked (8:15-19). God commanded them to "be fruitful and multiply on the earth" (8:17), which would repopulate the earth with people. As an act of worship and praise to God for their protection, Noah built an altar and offered of every clean animal (8:20). His offering was acceptable in the sight of God, who promised to never again destroy the earth by global flood, even though He knew man would remain evil (8:21).

Although God blessed Noah and his family (9:1), many things would be changing in the world around them. First, man's interaction with animals drastically changed. Up to this point man had only eaten herbs, but his diet would now include animals (9:2-3); however, he was not permitted to consume the blood of the animal, which symbolized life (9:4). Secondly, God established capital punishment to provide consequences to anyone who would take the life of another (9:5). Since man is created in the image of God, his life carried value. Murder cheapened the value of life and God demanded that a murderer's life be taken from him (9:6). The New Testament also seems to support capital punishment in the current age (Romans 13:4). The last thing that changed was God's view of destroying all the earth by flood (9:8-17). In the days of Noah, God used a global flood to destroy all living things for man's disobedience, but God made an everlasting covenant with Noah, and all generations to follow, that He would never again use a global flood to destroy all living things from the earth (9:11). As a visible reminder of this promise, God created rainbows which would forever symbolize God's covenant with Noah to never again destroy the earth with a global flood (9:12-17).

Following the establishment of this covenant, the reader is reminded that Noah's three sons (Ham, Shem, and Japheth) and their wives began repopulating the earth (9:18-19). The story then focuses on Ham (father of Canaan) who had gotten a glimpse of his drunken father, Noah, lying naked in his tent (9:20-22a). Not much detail is provided concerning what happened while Ham was with his father in the tent, but the story implies that something sinful took place. Most believe that Ham prided himself in seeing his father in such an undignified and weak position. Thinking that his two brothers would share in his attitude toward their father, Ham told them what he had seen; however, they did not share in his feelings and respectfully covered their father's nakedness (9:22b-23). When Noah woke from his sleep he knew what Ham had done, so he pronounced a curse on Ham's descendants, "Cursed *be* Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren" (9:25). This implied that that Ham's descendants, the Canaanites, would serve or be conquered by the descendants of Shem and Japheth, whom Noah blessed (9:26-27).

Dear God, may I live my life in the ways You have established.

Genesis 10:1-11:9



Following the flood judgment for man's continual disobedience (Genesis 6-8), Noah's family was commanded to repopulate the earth (9:1). Over the course of time, the earth was filled with people who descended from Noah's three sons - Ham, Shem, and Japheth (10:1). The fourteen descendants of Japheth are detailed in Genesis 10:2-5 and their tribes eventually occupy the northern territories (10:5). These northern tribes do not have much connection to Israel's history, except for some mentions in some of the prophetic books. In Genesis 10:6-20 the descendants of Ham, who would eventually occupy the eastern and southern territories, are detailed. Noah cursed Ham's descendants (9:18-27) and throughout history the tribes of

Ham became enemies of Israel. Found within the genealogy of Ham's descendants, Nimrod (a grandson of Ham) is revealed as a very powerful leader who was known as being a mighty hunter (10:8-9).

Scripture also reveals that he also established numerous powerful cities, which would eventually become the enemies of Israel (10:11-12). It is also significant to point out that Nimrod is responsible for establishing Babel (Babylon), who would later destroy Jerusalem and God's people in approximately 605-539 BC. Genesis 10:21-31 details the descendants of Shem. Notable in Shem's genealogy is the birth of Peleg, who lived at a time when the "earth was divided" (10:25).

This mention of the earth being divided is detailed in Genesis 11:1-9. The entire earth spoke one language at this time (11:1), but men became prideful and attempted to build a tower in Babel whose height reached into the heavens (11:2-4a). Instead of scattering to fill the earth, the people (led by Nimrod) decided to settle down, establish a city, and build a tower as a monument to make a name for themselves (11:4b). As a judgment for their pride, God confused the one language of the earth and caused people to speak many languages (11:5-7). Since they could no longer understand what each other were saying, they moved to different regions (Genesis 10) according to the language that they spoke (11:8-9). When Israel read Moses' account of this incident, they would understand three things.

First, Israel would understand the origin of languages. Secondly, they would know more about enemy nations such as Babylon. Lastly, Israel would come to understand that obeying God leads to blessing, but disobeying Him leads to punishment.

Dear God, continue to remind me that obeying You is the best thing I can do.

Genesis 11:10-12:3

The world greatly changed when the global flood destroyed all life from the face of the earth as a punishment for man's continual disobedience (Genesis 6-7). Only Noah's family survived the flood and they were entrusted with repopulating the earth (9:1). As mankind began to grow in numbers, some began lifting themselves up in pride by seeking to make a name for themselves through building a powerful city as well as a tower which reached into the heavens (11:1-9). Man's pride caused God to confuse their languages forcing them to spread out across the earth and group themselves according to common language (11:8-9). Moses provided the details of these newly formed tribes which had been scattered, along with a genealogy of each of Noah's sons - Ham, Shem, and Japheth (Genesis 10).

In Genesis 11:10-26 Moses begins to specifically trace the genealogy of Shem , who was blessed by God (9:26-27), all the way to Abram (later Abraham) which would have provided the Israelites with the knowledge of their heritage. Beginning in Genesis 11:27 Moses details the family of Terah, "This *is* the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot. And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans" (11:27-28). According to Joshua 24:2, Abram's father was an idolater living in the land of Ur. As the story of Abram develops, it is interesting to realize that he was raised in a pagan family and worshiped other gods. Abram eventually married a woman named Sarah, but she was not able to have children (11:29-30); furthermore, Abram and Sarah left their native land with Terah and traveled to Haran (11:31). While they were settled in Haran, Abram's father died (11:32). It is apparent that during his time in Ur, Abram had received God's command to move from Ur to the land of Canaan (12:1). Abram made the 600 mile journey to Haran where he settled and then God repeated His command for Abram and his family to relocate to Canaan (Acts 7:2).

Along with the command to move his family, God made an unconditional and everlasting covenant with Abram declaring, "I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. 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" (12:2-3). This is what is known as the Abrahamic Covenant where God promised three things to Abram: a great nation/land (12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (12:2b), and a great name (12:2c). Through Abram's nation and name, he would become a blessing to "all families of the earth" (12:3). Paul revealed the true meaning behind this blessing, "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.'* So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham" (Galatians 3:8-9). Hidden within this blessing to Abram, God promised that Jesus Christ would come through his line and bring hope to the world (Genesis 3:15).

Dear God, thank You for bringing hope to the world through fulfilling Your promises to Abram.

Genesis 12:4-20

God made an unconditional and everlasting covenant with Abram to give him a great nation/land (12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (12:2b), and a great name (12:2c); furthermore, through Abram's great nation and name, he would become a blessing to "all families of the earth" (12:3). This was a reference to God bringing a Savior into the world who would offer forgiveness of sin to all mankind (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 3:8-9). Abram acted in faith upon God's covenant and departed from Ur. Although he stopped for some time in Haran, Abram eventually arrived in Canaan around 2090 BC (12:4-6). Upon Abram's arrival in Canaan, God appeared to him and promised to give the land to his descendants (12:7a). As an act of worship and declaration of his faith in the one true God, Abram built an altar in Canaan, a land plagued with idolatry.

A severe famine fell upon Canaan soon after Abram's arrival, so he had to make a journey with Sarah (his wife) to Egypt where food was usually available (12:10). When they were close to entering Egypt, Abram asked Sarah to identify herself as his sister because he was fearful that the Egyptians would kill him to take Sarah as one of their wives (12:11-13). Abram's fear was confirmed. As soon as they entered into Egypt, the princes of Pharaoh noticed Sarah's beauty and requested that she be brought into Pharaoh's house (12:14-15). Abram was also treated well for the sake of Sarah (12:16). Although Abram's lie may seem harmless, it proved that his faith wavered regarding God's protection and promise (12:1-3). God intervened in this situation by bringing plagues on the house of Pharaoh (12:17). As a result of these plagues upon his house, Pharaoh somehow finds out that Sarah is Abram's wife and says to him, "What *is* this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she *was* your wife? 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" (12:18-19). Pharaoh then commanded his men to send Abram and his wife away from Egypt (12:20). This story highlights Abram's lack of faith in God's unconditional and everlasting promise. If God covenanted with Abram, He would fulfill it no matter the circumstance. Abram would have to learn the importance of trusting in God's plan even when obstacles were evident.

Dear God, help me to trust in Your promises even when difficulties arise.

Genesis 13:1-18

After the incident in Egypt, Abram returned to the place between Bethel and Ai where he had first built an altar to the Lord (13:1, 3-4; 12:7-9). Abram renewed his relationship with the Lord and once again worshiped Him (13:4). Lot, Abram's nephew (11:27-28), also accompanied him on this journey and returned with him to this place. Both Abram and Lot owned great amounts of cattle (13:2, 5), but the land on which they were living could not sustain the vast number of herds (13:6). Because the land was overcrowded by cattle, a conflict arose between the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot as they argued for space (13:7). In order to resolve the conflict between the herdsmen, Abram evidenced a selfless attitude by allowing Lot to have the first choice of land. 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. *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" (13:8-9). Those who follow Christ should embrace this same type of attitude in the midst of conflict. Lot looked at the land before him and chose to settle in the Jordan Valley, which was the most fertile and lush part of the land; however, Moses (writing 700 years after this occurred) points out that Lot's choice put him in close proximity to Sodom and Gomorrah, which God destroyed (13:10; also see Genesis 19). Although Lot's decision to settle in this region seemed like the best choice, it also placed him close to the men of Sodom who were described as "exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord" (13:13).

Abram departed from Lot and settled in the land of Canaan (13:12a). While he was there God appeared to him and said, "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are— northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, *then* your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you" (13:14-17). These words affirmed the covenant promise God had made with Abram in Genesis 12:1-3. Upon hearing God's reaffirming words, Abram moved his tent and, once again, "built an altar there to the Lord" (13:18). Abram, although not perfect (see Genesis 12:10-20), responded to God's promise and blessing by worshipping God.

Dear God, may people see me as one who is a worshiper of God in all things.

Genesis 14:1-24

God reaffirmed with Abram His covenant promise which assured him a great nation/land (12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (12:2b), and a great name (12:2c). Through Abram's great nation and name, he would become a blessing to "all families of the earth" (12:3). Hidden within this blessing to Abram, God promised that Jesus Christ would come through his line and bring hope to the world by bringing forgiveness of sin (Genesis 3:15). Although God promised Abram the land before him (13:14-17), much of it was currently occupied by other nations who often battled each other for more power and property. Such was the case in Genesis 14 when four Eastern kings (14:1) battled against five Jordanian kings (14:2). The four Eastern kings eventually defeated the five Jordanian kings (14:3-11) and "took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way." By this time Lot, Abram's nephew, had become a resident of Sodom and he was taken captive (14:12). "Abram the Hebrew" (first mention of Hebrew nation) became aware of Lot's capture (14:13) and gathered 318 armed servants to rescue him from his captors (14:14). This small army pursued Lot's captors over 150 miles and "brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother [nephew] Lot, as well as the women and the people" (14:15-16).

After the captives returned, the freed king of Sodom met him near Jerusalem (14:17) but Abram first met with "Melchizedek king of Salem...the priest of God Most High" (14:18). Melchizedek, a righteous ruler who was God's representative, pronounced a blessing upon Abram (14:19) and acknowledged that it was God alone who had given him the victory in battle (14:20a). Abram responded to the blessing by giving Melchizedek a tithe (ten percent) of the spoils (14:20b; see Hebrews 7:4). Many view Melchizedek as a type of Christ (see Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:17, 21).

Also acknowledging Abram's victory over his enemies, the king of Sodom asked him to return the people who had been captured but keep the goods for himself (14:21). Abram's responds by saying, "I solemnly swear to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, 'I am the one who made Abram rich.' I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre" (14:21-24). If Abram would have accepted the king of Sodom's offer, he may have been subject to him. In denying this offer from the king, Abram was declaring that his faith was in God fulfilling His promise to bless him (Genesis 12:1-3). Abram was quickly becoming a man who embraced the plans of God instead of settling for what the world could offer him.

Dear God, I desire to have Your blessing on my life.

Genesis 15:1-21

An unconditional and everlasting covenant had been made between God and Abram (known as the Abrahamic Covenant) which promised that through Abram would come a great nation/land (12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (12:2b), and a great name (12:2c). Although this verbal covenant was made by God in Genesis 12:1-3 and reaffirmed in Genesis 13:14-17, Abram had his doubts that it could be fulfilled, especially considering that his wife could not have children (11:30). Because Sarai was barren, Abram found it impossible to believe that God could give him countless descendants as God had promised in Genesis 13:6. Abram expressed his concern to God saying, "O Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir" (15:2-3, NLT). Since Abram had no son, he embraced a cultural custom which allowed him to arrange for a servant to be his heir. The Lord quickly responded to Abram's decision saying, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir. Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have" (15:4-5, NLT). When Abram heard the words of the Lord, he believed and his faith was counted as righteousness (15:6). Faith alone results in righteousness.

Even though Abram believed in God's promise, he asked for confirmation (15:8). God told Abram to take some animals, cut them in half, and place the pieces opposite of each other (15:9-10). This ancient practice allowed the two parties making the covenant to walk between the pieces of these animals and commit that the same be done to them if the covenant was not kept (see Jeremiah 34:18-19). Since the covenant did not involve Abram keeping the promise, he did not have to walk between the animals (15:17). Instead, God caused a deep sleep to come over Abram (15:12) and he was made aware that his future descendants would be strangers in their land as well as suffer 400 years of affliction by another nation (15:13); however, God would eventually judge this nation (15:14). After these future happenings were revealed to Abram in a vision, a smoking oven and a burning torch, both symbolizing the presence of God, passed through the animal pieces as a confirmation of God's everlasting covenant with Abram (15:17). Although Abram's descendants would experience suffering in the future, God promised that He would fulfill the promises He made to Abram (15:18-21). God can be trusted to keep His promises, even when the fulfillment cannot be seen.

Dear God, I embrace the promises You have made throughout Scripture and believe that You will bring them to pass in my life.

Genesis 16:1-16

The covenant God made with Abram promised many descendants (13:16) and to make of him a great nation (12:2); however, this promise seemed impossible to Abram since his wife, Sarai, was barren (11:30; 15:2). Abram offered to help God fulfill this promise by implementing an ancient custom where a servant could be made heir (15:2-3), but God affirmed His covenant to Abram which guaranteed that he would have a biological son with his wife (15:4-5). After hearing God's affirmation, Abram believed God's word and "He accounted it to him for righteousness" (15:6). God's promise was not immediately fulfilled and this caused much anguish for Abram and Sarai; in fact, Sarai became very frustrated in being childless so she decided to resort to an ancient practice in order to help God fulfill His promise. Barren wives often obtained children through a surrogate mother and in this case Sarai solicited her servant, Hagar, to conceive a child with Abram (16:1-2). The actions of both Abram and Sarai were a blatant disregard for God's promise to provide a biological son to them. Any attempt to adjust God's plan will always lead to consequences. Hagar eventually conceived a child with Abram, but despised Sarai for suggesting this as a solution for her barrenness (16:4). Sarai blamed Abram for Hagar's hatred of her (16:5) and he released her to treat Hagar however she wished (16:6a). As a result of the harsh treatment by Sarai, Hagar "fled from her presence" (16:6b).

Hagar was very distraught over this situation so an angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority. I will give you more descendants than you can count. You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means 'God hears'), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress" (16:7-11, NLT). The angel also revealed that her son would be a "...wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives" (16:12). Although Ishmael was a gift from God to Hagar, he was not the promised seed (12:3; Galatians 3:8). Ishmael and his Arabic descendants would cause future problems because of Abram and Sarai's sin. Hagar was elated that God would give her a son who would become the father of a great tribe. Moses writes concerning the response of Hagar, "Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, 'You are the God who sees me.' She also said, 'Have I truly seen the One who sees me?' So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi, which means 'well of the Living One who sees me'" (16:13-14). Hagar did give birth to a son whom 86 year-old Abram named Ishmael.

Dear God, help me to believe in Your promises even when I cannot see the fulfillment. May I patiently await Your intervention and not attempt to make my own way.

Genesis 17:1-27

God had made an unconditional and everlasting covenant with Abram (known as the Abrahamic Covenant) which promised him a great nation/land (12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (12:2b), and a great name (12:2c). This verbal covenant was made by God in Genesis 12:1-3 and reaffirmed in Genesis 13:14-17, but Abram and Sarai had doubts that it could be fulfilled, especially considering that Sarai was barren (11:30). Abram attempted to help fulfill God's promise by choosing his servant as an heir (15:1-5), but God promised that this promise would be fulfilled through a biological son (15:6-21). Sarai also attempted to help God's promise by forcing Abram to conceive an heir with her servant, Hagar (16:1-16). This resulted in the birth of Ishmael, although he would not be the fulfillment of God's promise.

When Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him with another affirmation that His promise of an heir would soon be fulfilled (17:1-2). Abram fell on his face (17:3) and God marked this reaffirmation of the covenant by changing Abram's name to Abraham, meaning "father of many nations" (17:4-7). Not only would Abraham become a father of many nations, but his descendants would inherit the "land of Canaan as an everlasting covenant" (17:8-9). As a sign of the covenant, every male child born among Abraham's descendants was to be circumcised, which was the cutting away of the male foreskin (17:10-14). Circumcision would identify that child as a part of Abraham's lineage. Abraham obeyed God's command and circumcised every male among his house (17:23-27).

God also changed Sarai's name to Sarah (17:15) and promised that she would become the "mother of many nations" (17:16). In response to hearing God's reaffirmation, Abraham thought to himself, "How could I become a father at the age of 100? And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?" (17:17, NLT). Abraham still lacked faith that his barren wife could have a child, so he asked that Ishmael be the heir of the promise (17:18). God answered Abraham's request saying, "No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant" (17:19). Although God would bring blessing to Ishmael and his descendants (17:20), His covenant would be established with Isaac who would be born within a year (17:21). God's promise to Abraham seemed impossible to fulfill, but God can accomplish all things.

Dear God, may my faith rest in You and not what I believe to be possible or impossible.

Genesis 18:1-15

After God reaffirmed His everlasting covenant with Abraham and commanded that circumcision be the sign of the covenant, the Lord and two angels appeared to him in Hebron (18:1-2). Abraham greeted them while Sarah prepared a meal for their guests (18:3-8). The three men wanted to know Sarah's location and Abraham said that she was in the tent (18:9). The Lord then spoke and confirmed that Abraham and Sarah would soon have a son, but Sarah heard the words of the Lord, laughed at the possibility, and thought to herself, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (18:10-12). Humanly speaking, Sarah knew that she and Abraham "...were old, well advanced in age...passed the age of childbearing" (18:11), but she did not consider God's ability to do the impossible. God knew what Sarah had thought in her heart and He responded to it by asking Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a *child*, since I am old?'" (18:13). Not leaving Abraham any time to respond to His question, the Lord asked him another question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (18:14).

These words of the Lord were at the heart of this situation. Is God capable of doing what is humanly impossible? Can God intervene when all hope is lost? During this time of doubt, Abraham and Sarah should have embraced God's promise instead of fixing their eyes on the circumstance. Although God had promised a son to Abraham and Sarah, they could not see the fulfillment because they were looking for human solutions. Both Abraham and Sarah attempted to help God fulfill His promise, but God's plan was not able to be fulfilled through human effort. God's plan was divine and His promise would be kept even though circumstances may not have been in their favor.

The Lord's question to Abraham must also be asked in our circumstance. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Dear God, nothing is too hard for You. Help me to believe and act on this fact.

Genesis 18:16-33

Abraham had been visited by the Lord and His two angels, who reaffirmed that he would have a biological son with his barren wife, Sarah (18:1-15). Their son, Isaac, would become the son of promise and through his descendants, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Both Abraham and Sarah struggled with believing that God would bring this to pass, but God reminded them that there is not anything too hard for the Lord. As Abraham's three guests arose to leave they looked toward Sodom (18:16), but the Lord wondered if He should share with Abraham the judgment which was about to take place in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:17). Since all nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's descendants (18:18), God felt that these two cities should be removed because they did not deserve the blessing; furthermore, God wanted to teach an important lesson to Abraham and his descendants concerning obedience to His ways (18:19). The Lord decided to reveal His plan of judgment to Abraham saying, "I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know" (18:20-21, NLT).

Upon hearing of God's pending judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham asked if God intended to destroy the righteous along with the wicked; in other words, Abraham felt that God should spare the cities for the sake of the righteous living there (18:22-23). Abraham knew that God was merciful so he said, "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?" (18:24-25). God agreed with Abraham to spare the cities if fifty righteous people could be found (18:26). Abraham continued to question God's mercy and eventually agreed that if ten righteous could be found in the cities, God would not destroy them (18:27-32). Ten righteous could not be found in Sodom and Gomorrah so Abraham went on his way and God's judgment upon these cities was imminent (18:33). Why was it necessary to bring judgment upon these wicked cities? The wicked must be held accountable for their actions. Although God's mercy is clearly seen in this incident, He had to carry out justice on these cities who had become extremely wicked. 2 Peter 3:9 reminds us that God "...is longsuffering [patient] toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." Even though God is patient with sinners, He will eventually judge those who refuse to turn away from sin.

Dear God, I am reminded of Your mercy and pray for many to turn back to You before it is too late.

Genesis 19:1-38

Before God brought blessing upon the descendants of Abraham, He determined to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as judgment for their extreme wickedness (18:20-21). Their continual sin had caused God's mercy to run out forcing Him to act before all nations of the earth were blessed through Abraham. Abraham was compassionate toward the people of Sodom and Gomorrah causing him to ask if God would destroy the righteous in the cities along with the wicked (18:23). God agreed with Abraham to spare the cities if ten righteous people could be found, but wickedness had overtaken both cities and righteousness could not be found in ten people (18:24-33). Genesis 19 gives the reader a glimpse into the wickedness of these two cities as Abraham has departed for home (18:33) and the two angels, who had taken on human form (18:1-15), enter into Sodom where they found Lot sitting at the gate (19:1a). Upon seeing these two angels, Lot sought to protect them from the perverse nature of this city and invited them to take refuge in his home (19:1b-3). Before Lot and his two guests went to bed, the men of the city surrounded his home and said, "Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them! (19:4-5, NLT). Lot quickly defended these two guests in his home but offered his two daughters to satisfy their desires (19:6-8). Lot's actions show that he also had fallen into perverseness. The men of Sodom could not control their homosexual lusts and would not accept Lot's daughters, so they continued to demand that his two guests be given to them (19:9). Lot's guests saved him from these unruly men by pulling him back into the house and causing the men outside the home to be struck with blindness (19:11).

The two angels warned Lot to gather up his family and leave because the city was about to be destroyed (19:12-13), so he did as they commanded (19:14). As they were departing, the angels urged them to hurry before the city was destroyed but Lot lingered so the angels took their hands and they miraculously found themselves outside the city (19:15-16). The angels warned them to depart and not look back, so God allowed them to escape into a city called Zoar (19:17-23). "Then the Lord rained down fire and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, wiping out all the people and every bit of vegetation" (19:24-25). As this was happening, Lot's wife disobeyed the angels' command not to look back (19:17) and she was turned into a pillar of salt (19:26). Abraham got up early in the morning and saw the smoke rising up from Sodom and Gomorrah, but God had remembered Abraham (18:22-33) and spared Lot from destruction (19:27-29).

Although Lot and his two daughters had been spared from destruction, the daughters had filled their hearts with the immoral philosophy of Sodom and Gomorrah. In order to preserve the lineage of their father, they got their father drunk and slept with him, which resulted in sons being born to both of them (19:30-36). The descendants of these two sons (the Moabites and Ammonites), born through incest, would become the enemies of Israel (19:37-38). Although God is merciful toward sinners, His mercy does expire and sin will eventually be judged.

Dear God, may I be quick to recognize my sin and turn away from it.

Genesis 20:1-18

Earlier in the story of Abraham and Sarah they had entered into Egypt because there was a famine in their land (12:10-20). Since Sarah was very beautiful, Abraham was concerned that the Egyptian king would be smitten with her beauty and desire to take her as one of his wives. Abraham feared that Pharaoh may kill him in order to take Sarah as his wife, so he asked her to lie and tell the Egyptians that they were siblings. Although this was true in a sense (Abraham and Sarah had the same father but different mothers), Abraham was not telling the whole truth (see Genesis 20:12). Pharaoh did end up taking Sarah into his harem, but God sent plagues upon Pharaoh until he discovered that Abraham had lied. Instead of trusting that God would protect his family, Abraham lied to avoid potential danger. Lying is never a part of God's plan.

Abraham found himself in a similar situation as he traveled with his wife, Sarah, to the Philistine city of Gerar (20:1). There they were greeted by Abimelech, king of Gerar, and Abraham told him that Sarah was his sister (20:2) because he feared that they would kill him (20:11). Abimelech sent for Sarah and took her as his wife (20:2b), "but that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, 'You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!'" (20:3, NLT). Abimelech proclaimed his innocence before God (20:4-5) and God commanded that he restore her to Abraham, God's prophet (20:6-7). The next morning Abimelech called for Abraham and rebuked him for his lie saying, "What have you done to us? What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! Whatever possessed you to do such a thing? (20:8-10, NLT). Abraham attempted to justify his lie saying that he feared for his life (20:11) and that Sarah was really his half-sister (20:12-13). The continual lies of Abraham showed that he had a hard time trusting that God could protect him and the promises He had made (12:1-3).

Then Abimelech "...took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him" (20:14, NLT). Abimelech allowed them to live in his land and even gave Abraham 1,000 pieces of silver (20:15-16). "Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. For the Lord had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham's wife, Sarah" (20:17-18). The lies of Abraham caused many to experience unnecessary circumstances. Although telling the truth is not always easy, it does prevent needless pain and confusion.

Dear God, may I be known as a person who tells the truth in all circumstances.

Genesis 21:1-34

Twenty-five years had passed since God made an unconditional and everlasting covenant with Abraham to give him a great nation/land (12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (12:2b), and a great name (12:2c). God promised that through Abraham's descendants he would become a blessing to "all families of the earth" (12:3). It seemed impossible for Abraham to have many descendants since his wife, Sarah, was barren (11:30); however, God continually affirmed that Abraham and Sarah would have a biological son (15:4-5; 17:7). The fulfillment of the promise had finally arrived (around 2065 BC) when "Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age..." (21:1-2). They named him Isaac and he was circumcised according to God's command and as a sign of the covenant (21:3-5). Sarah, who had laughed at God's promise, was now joyful and praised God for the child of her old age (21:6-7).

When Isaac was weaned (probably 2 or 3 years old), Abraham made a great feast (21:8), but Ishmael (Hagar's son) mocked and ridiculed him (21:9). Sarah became angry and demanded that Abraham send Ishmael and Hagar into the desert so that Ishmael would not be an heir of the promise alongside Isaac (21:10). Abraham was offended by Sarah's request (21:11), but God assured him that Isaac would be the heir of the promise (21:12) and a nation would descend from Ishmael (21:13). Abraham acted on God's assurance and sent Ishmael and Hagar into the Wilderness of Beersheba (21:14). As they entered into the wilderness, Ishmael became desperately thirsty and cried out for lack of water (21:17). His mother, Hagar, also cried out asking God to spare the life of her son (21:15-16). God heard their cries and assured Hagar that her son would live and that a great nation would descend from him (21:17-18).

When Hagar opened her eyes, she discovered a well of water and gave her son a drink (21:19). "And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt" (21:20-21).

The story shifts back to Abraham and he makes a treaty with Abimelech and the commander of his army to treat them kindly since they had allowed him to dwell in their land (21:22-24). Abimelech made this agreement with Abraham only because he recognized the blessing of God on Abraham's life (21:22). Also as a part of this treaty, Abraham and Abimelech also agreed to share the region's sparse water resources (21:25-32). Abraham planted a tree there to remind him of the treaty and then he "...called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God" (21:33).

Dear God, I worship You as the Everlasting God and the One who fulfills His promises.

Genesis 22:1-24

God made a covenant with Abraham which promised a great nation/land (12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (12:2b), and a great name (12:2c). Through Abraham's nation and name, he would become a blessing to "all families of the earth" (12:3). Paul later reveals that this "blessing" was Jesus Christ, who would offer hope and forgiveness of sin to the world (Galatians 3:8-9, 16). The only obstacle to giving Abraham many descendants and blessing all nations through his lineage was the fact that his wife, Sarah, was barren (11:30). Although Abraham and Sarah doubted that they would ever conceive a son, God worked a miracle and Sarah gave birth to Isaac (21:1-7). The birth of Isaac was a joyful time for both Abraham and Sarah, who had waited 25 years for God to give them a son; however, God was about to test Abraham's faith in His promise.

Several years after Isaac's birth (20 or more years), God tested Abraham (22:1) by giving him a command to "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" (22:2). God's command may seem unrealistic or even unreasonable, but it was a simple test to prove Abraham's faith in God's promise. Did Abraham trust that God would fulfill His promise? In response to God's command, Abraham wakes up the next morning without hesitation and begins the journey to Moriah with two of his servants and his son, Isaac (22:3-4). As they arrived at the place of sacrifice, Abraham evidences his faith in God's plan by telling his two servants that he would return with his Isaac (22:5). The book of Hebrews later revealed that Abraham believed that even if he sacrificed Isaac, God would raise him up (Hebrews 11:17-19). Abraham prepares the altar and places Isaac on it, but as Abraham takes the knife and stretches out his hand to kill his son, God says, "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" (22:6-12). Abraham's obedience to God's command proved his faith. Instead of sacrificing his son, Abraham sacrificed a ram, which introduced the concept of substitutionary atonement - one dying in place of another (22:13-14). Substitutionary atonement is best pictured when Jesus Christ died in the place of sinners so that those who have faith might be made righteous before God (2 Corinthians 5:21). God also took this opportunity to reaffirm His promise to Abraham (22:15-19).

Dear God, give me faith like Abraham's faith.

Genesis 23:1-20

Isaac's miraculous birth to Abraham and Sarah (21:1-7) was the beginning of God's fulfillment of His unconditional and everlasting promise (12:1-3). Although God tested Abraham's faith in His promise (22:1-19), Abraham believed that God would use Isaac to eventually bring blessing on all nations of the earth. Following Moses' detail of Abraham's testing (Genesis 22) he provides the details surrounding the death and burial of Sarah, Abraham's wife and Isaac's mother (Genesis 23). Isaac had been born somewhere around 2065 BC and Sarah's death at 127 years of age (23:1) occurred around 2028 BC while dwelling in the land of Canaan (23:2). Abraham mourned and wept for her and since he was a foreigner in the land of Canaan he requested that the sons of Heth (Hittites) give him property to bury her (23:3-4). The sons of Heth responded saying, "Listen, my lord, you are an honored prince among us. Choose the finest of our tombs and bury her there. No one here will refuse to help you in this way" (23:5-6, NLT). The sons of Heth then negotiated with Ephron, a wealthy neighbor and son of Zohar, to purchase the cave of Machpelah (23:7-9). Abraham desired to pay full price for the property (23:9), but Ephron insisted on giving the cave to Abraham (23:10-11). Ephron's offer of the cave (and the field) was not necessarily motivated out of generosity, but was probably a form of cultural bargaining. Abraham ended up paying 400 shekels of silver for the cave and the field so that he could bury Sarah as well as subsequent family members in this place (23:12-16). This land, located in the land of Canaan, was deeded to Abraham and he buried Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah (23:17-19). Since burial was supposed to take place in a person's native land, Abraham's purchase of this field signified that he looked forward in faith to the time when God would allow his descendants to inherit the land. Eventually Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob would be buried in this cave (25:9; 49:31; 50:13). Abraham's purchase of this land may seem insignificant, but it was highly significant because he now owned a small piece of land right in the middle of the land which God had promised to Abraham and his descendants (23:20).

Dear God, help me to embrace faith while awaiting the fulfillment of Your promises to me.

Genesis 24:1-67

Abraham's wife, Sarah, had died and he had purchased some land in Canaan for a burial ground (23:1-2). His purchase of this small piece of land signified that he looked forward in faith to the time when God would allow his descendants to inherit the land (23:3-19). Abraham was also advancing in age (24:1), so he gave some instructions to his oldest servant, Eliezer, concerning Isaac saying, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac" (24:2-4). This pledge between Abraham and Eliezer was meant to protect Isaac from marrying a pagan woman who may lead his descendants away from the Lord. Although Eliezer expressed concern about a woman's willingness to come to the land of Canaan to marry Isaac(24:5), Abraham assured him that an angel of the Lord would go before him and prepare the heart of Isaac's future wife (24:6-9).

Eliezer obeyed the voice of Abraham and departed from Canaan to the city of Nahor where he stopped at a well and prayed that God would give him success in finding a wife for Isaac (24:10-14). Before he finished praying, Rebekah appeared at the well to draw water and not only offered Eliezer water, but she also offered to water his camels (24:15-20). Rebekah's actions were a direct answer to Eliezer's prayer (see Genesis 24:14). Through formal introductions, Eliezer found out that Rebekah was Isaac's cousin, which made her a part of Abraham's family (24:21-25). Eliezer "bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord" in response to finding this woman (24:26-27). He eventually made his way to Rebekah's home, where Eliezer revealed all the details surrounding his journey and his mission to find a wife for Isaac, his master Abraham's son (24:28-48). After hearing about God's providence in the situation, Rebekah's brother, Laban, agreed to give Rebekah to Isaac as his wife (24:49-51). Eliezer rejoiced in God's leading and presented gifts to the family as a dowry (payment) for Rebekah to become Isaac's wife (24:52-53). The next morning, Eliezer departed with Rebekah and her family blessed her saying, "Our sister, *may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them*" (24:54-61). When Rebekah arrived in the land of Canaan, she was met by Isaac, who "...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*" (24:62-67).

Dear God, thank You for answering our prayers and working through the details of our lives.

Genesis 25:1-34

Following the death of Sarah (Genesis 23), Abraham and Sarah's son of promise (Genesis 15), Isaac (Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7), took Rebekah as his wife (Genesis 24). Abraham was beginning to see God fulfill His unconditional and everlasting covenant (known as the Abrahamic Covenant) which promised that through him would come a great nation/land (12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (12:2b), and a great name (12:2c). Now that Abraham owned some land in Canaan and Isaac had taken a wife, God's covenant promise was becoming reality. After Sarah's death, Abraham took Keturah (a concubine) as his wife and she had many sons (25:1-4). In order to ensure that Isaac would be the heir of God's promise, Abraham gave Isaac all that he had (25:5) and then gave gifts to the other sons and sent them east of Canaan where they established various Arab tribes (25:6). Abraham then died at the age of 175 and was buried by his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael, in the cave of Machpelah where Sarah was also buried (25:7-10). "And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac" (25:11).

Moses then provides some details concerning the genealogies of Ishmael (25:12-18) and Isaac (25:19-34). Although God kept His promise to give Ishmael 12 princes in his lineage (17:20-21), the focus centers on Isaac and his descendants. Rebekah, much like Isaac's mother Sarah, was barren and Isaac pleaded with the Lord to give his wife a child (25:21). God granted his request and she conceived twins, "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" (25:22). The Lord explained the struggle to Rebekah saying, "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" (25:23). Rebekah eventually gave birth to twins somewhere around 2000 BC. Esau, the firstborn, was red and hairy but as he was being born his twin brother, Jacob, "took hold of Esau's heel" (25:24-26). The circumstances surrounding their birth prepared the way for much divisiveness between the two brothers throughout their lifetime. The distinctiveness of the two sons was quickly evident. "Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents" (25:27). Not only did their unique personalities cause problems in their relationship, but also the fact that Isaac loved Esau and Rebekah loved Jacob (25:28).

Jacob and Esau's struggle came to a climax when Jacob was cooking stew one day and Esau arrived from the fields tired and weary (25:29). Esau requested that Jacob feed him some of the red stew (25:30), but Jacob cunningly used Esau's hunger as an occasion to buy his birthright (25:31). Esau, ignorant of the spiritual value of the birthright, willingly gave up a double portion of his inheritance and his right to be the family chief and priest because of his hunger (25:32-34). Esau's lack of respect for his birthright reveals his true nature as a godless person (Hebrews 12:16).

Dear God, may I be aware of the things that are truly important.

Genesis 26:1-35

Abraham and Sarah had died and now their son, Isaac, dwelt in the land of Canaan with his wife, Rebekah. Isaac and Rebekah gave birth to twin sons, Jacob and Esau. While they were living in the land of Canaan, the second great famine (see Genesis 12:10 for the first one) occurred causing Isaac to go see Abimelech, king of the Philistines. Isaac was considering taking his family to Egypt to survive the plague, but the Lord appeared to him saying, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your descendants, just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father" (26:2-3, NLT). These words were a reaffirmation of the covenant between God and Isaac's father, Abraham. Not only did God affirm that Isaac and his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan, but He also assured him innumerable descendants (26:4a) and that all nations of the earth would be blessed through him (26:4b).

Isaac obeyed the voice of the Lord and dwelt in Gerar. While dwelling in Gerar, the men of the city inquired about his beautiful wife, Rebekah, but he told them she was his sister fearing that they may kill him to take her as a wife (26:6-7). This incident is very similar to what happened to Isaac's father, Abraham, in Genesis 12:10-20 and Genesis 20:1-4. Abimelech (not to be confused with the Abimelech in Genesis 12:10-20) soon discovered that Isaac had lied about his relationship with Rebekah (26:8-10) and declared that anyone who touched Isaac or Rebekah would be put to death (26:11). This was an act of God's sovereign protection on Isaac and Rebekah, even though they had lied.

Isaac became prosperous in the land of Canaan, but the Philistines became jealous and decided to plug up Isaac's wells (26:12-15). Abimelech, king of the Philistines, asked him to leave because Isaac had become mightier than all of them (26:16). Instead of fighting with them, Isaac decided to move to the valley and dig other wells but each time the herdsmen of Gerar argued with Isaac's herdsmen causing Isaac to depart (26:17-22). In the midst of this trying time, God appeared to Isaac and reminded him that he would keep His promise and cause him to prosper in this land (26:24). Isaac responded to God's assurance by building an altar and worshiping him (26:25). Abimelech, recognizing that God's blessing was upon Isaac and his descendants (26:26-29), later came to him and they made a treaty of peace (26:30-31). God's protection was on the seed of Abraham, Isaac. No opposition could stop God's covenant to give Abraham the land, a seed, and a blessing.

Dear God, thank You for keeping Your promises even when there is hardship. Help me to trust in You through my trials and to receive comfort from Your words.

Genesis 27:1-29

Isaac and Rebekah's twin sons, Jacob and Esau, were very different from the very beginning of their lives. Esau (the eldest) was known as an outdoors-man and was favored by his father (25:27-28); however, Jacob (the youngest) loved the comforts of home and was favored by his mother (25:27-28). Their differences were magnified in an incident when Jacob took advantage of Esau during a time of weakness and caused him to sell his birthright (25:29-34). This meant that Esau, the eldest and rightful heir to the birthright, forfeited to Jacob his double portion of the inheritance and his position as chief of the family.

As the time of Isaac's death came near, he told Esau to go hunting and then prepare him a meal so that he could pronounce a blessing upon him before he died (27:1-4). Although Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob (25:33) and disappointed his parents by marrying women from pagan nations (26:34-35), Isaac insisted on granting Esau the birthright. Rebekah overheard what Isaac had spoken to Esau and quickly commanded Jacob to bring two goats from the flock so that she could prepare a meal for Isaac and he would bless Jacob instead (27:5-10). Jacob hesitated at hearing his mother's plan (27:11), but she further devised the plan to make Jacob appear hairy like Esau and deceive his nearly blind father into blessing him rather than Esau (27:12-13).

Jacob obeyed the voice of his mother by bringing her two goats from the flock, which she prepared as a meal for Isaac (27:14). She also dressed Jacob in Esau's clothes and attached the skin of the goats to Jacob's hands and neck (27:15-16). Jacob then took the meal into his father and deceptively acted as if he were Esau in order to receive the blessing (27:17-19). Isaac hesitated in giving his blessing because he wondered how the meal had been prepared so quickly (27:20). He further inquired about his identity so Isaac asked him to come closer so he could see if the one standing before him was really Esau (27:21).

"So Jacob went closer to his father, and Isaac touched him. 'The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's,' Isaac said. But he did not recognize Jacob, because Jacob's hands felt hairy just like Esau's. So Isaac prepared to bless Jacob" (27:22-23, NLT). Although Isaac was still not fully convinced that it was Esau standing before him (27:24), he relied on his sense of touch (27:16, 23) and smell (27:27) to give away his blessing. Isaac finally declared his blessing over Jacob, whom he thought was Esau, saying, "May many nations become your servants, and may they bow down to you. May you be the master over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. All who curse you will be cursed, and all who bless you will be blessed" (27:29).

Dear God, protect our families from favoritism and deceit so that we may function in honesty and truth.

Genesis 27:30-28:9

Before the birth of her twin sons, Esau and Jacob, the Lord revealed to Rebekah that the eldest brother would serve his younger brother (Genesis 25:23). Isaac must have ignored the words of the Lord to Rebekah concerning their sons because he insisted on giving the blessing to Esau even though Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob (25:29-34) and brought disappointment to his parents by marrying pagan women (26:34). Isaac's intent on bestowing the blessing on Esau was ruined when Rebekah and Jacob deceived him into blessing Jacob instead of Esau. After Jacob had been blessed by his father and left his presence, Esau returned from hunting and brought a meal to his father in anticipation of his blessing (27:30-31). Thinking that he had already blessed Esau, Isaac was surprised when Esau asked for his blessing (27:32-33). Esau cried out for Isaac to also bless him, but Isaac responded saying, "Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing" (27:34-35, NLT). Not satisfied with his father's response, Esau begged Isaac to bless him also (27:36-38), but Isaac could only promise that Esau would not enjoy the earth's fertility and that his descendants (the Edomites) would strive against Jacob's descendants, Israel (27:39-40).

"From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: 'I will soon be mourning my father's death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob'" (27:41, NLT).

When Rebekah learned of Esau's plan to kill his brother, she warned Jacob and sent him to live with her brother, Laban, who lived in Haran (27:42-45). Rebekah covered over the fact of why Jacob was leaving and told Isaac that she was sending him to her people so that he could find a wife, unlike the local pagan women he would find nearby (27:46). Isaac commanded Jacob not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan, but demanded that he go and take a wife from the daughters of Laban (28:1-2). Although much deceit and lying had taken place within the family, Isaac was finally realizing that the promises of the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled through Jacob rather than Esau. Isaac then passed on to Jacob the blessing God had given to himself and Abraham (28:3-4). Jacob departed to the house of Laban (28:5) and when Esau knew that Isaac had blessed Jacob he attempted to gain favor with his father by marrying back into the line of Abraham by taking wives from the daughters of Ishmael; however, his foolish attempts only took him further into sin (28:6-9).

Dear God, remind me often of the consequences of lying and deceit that I may live my life in obedience to Your ways.

Genesis 28:10-22

The blessings of the Abrahamic covenant were passed on from Isaac to his son, Jacob (28:1-5). Esau, Jacob's twin brother, had sold his birthright (25:29-34) and any blessing associated with being the eldest brother had been taken away because of the deceit of his mother, Rebekah, and his brother (27:29). Jacob then departed from Canaan in order to marry a woman from the daughters of Laban, but as he was journeying from Beersheba to Haran he stopped to rest in Luz (28:10-11; see also 28:19). When he fell asleep, Jacob dreamed of a "...stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway" (28:12, NLT). The Lord appeared at the top of the stairway and confirmed the Abrahamic covenant with Jacob, which promised a land of their own (28:13), numerous descendants (28:14a), and that through him all nations of the earth would be blessed (28:14b). Along with confirming the covenant, God promised Jacob His divine protection until the covenant had been fulfilled (28:15).

When Jacob awoke from his sleep he exclaimed, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know *it*. *How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!*" (28:16-17). He then took the stone on which he had slept, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it (28:18). Setting something up as a pillar indicated it as a special place of religious worship. The name of the city where he had slept was called Luz, but he changed the name to Bethel, which meant "house of God" (28:19). All of Jacob's actions at Bethel were an expression of his joy over God's providential protection and His confirmation that the Abrahamic covenant would be fulfilled through him. Jacob then made a vow to God saying, "If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, and if I return safely to my father's home, then the Lord will certainly be my God. And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me" (28:20-22, NLT). These words were Jacob's first expression of his faith in God and indicated that he wholeheartedly believed that God was capable of keeping His promises. Every person, like Jacob, must also arrive at a place where they believe God's words to be true or not.

Dear God, I believe Your words to be true and respond by putting my faith in Your promises.

Genesis 29:1-30

Jacob departed from Canaan to find a wife from the house of Laban (27:41-28:2), his mother Rebekah's brother. On his journey toward Haran, the Lord appeared to Jacob in a dream to affirm the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant through him (28:10-15). Jacob rejoiced in God's goodness and worshiped Him there in Bethel (28:16-22). When Jacob arrived in the land of the people of the East, he stopped at a well where many flocks of sheep were watered (29:1-2). Jacob began talking with the shepherds who had gathered their flocks at the well and inquired if they knew Laban (29:3-5). The shepherds said that they were familiar with Laban and told Jacob that Laban's daughter, Rachel, was coming with her sheep right then (29:6). As Rachel arrived at the well with her sheep, Jacob quickly rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered her sheep (29:7-10). "Then Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept. 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" (29:11-12). When Laban heard Rachel's report, "he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house...and he stayed with him for one month" (29:13-14).

After Jacob had been there for a while, Laban insisted on paying him for his work so he asked what his wage should be. Jacob responded by saying that he would work for Laban seven years if he would give him Rachel as his wife (29:18). Laban had two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Leah was the oldest, but she was less beautiful than her younger sister Rachel, who was described as "beautiful of form and appearance" (29:15-17). Laban agreed to these terms (29:19), but at the end of the seven years he deceitfully sent Leah in to consummate the marriage with Jacob instead of Rachel (29:20-24). Jacob would not have realized the identity of the woman he was sleeping with because of the veil she was wearing. In the morning, Jacob discovered that he had consummated the marriage with Leah instead of Rachel. Jacob had deceived his brother and father (Genesis 27) and now Jacob was feeling the pains of deception. Laban explained to Jacob that he had done this because it was not acceptable for the younger daughter to be married before the older daughter (29:25-26). Although Jacob was disappointed with Laban's deceit, he agreed to work for him another seven years if he would give him Rachel as a wife following the week long wedding celebration and prior to the seven years of service (29:27-29). Now that Jacob was married to two women, which was not God's plan (Genesis 2:24; Leviticus 18:18), many problems would arise since Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (29:30).

Dear God, keep me from a deceptive heart.

Genesis 29:31-30:24

Jacob had worked for Laban seven years in order to receive the hand of his daughter, Rachel, in marriage; however, at the end of the seven years Laban deceived Jacob and gave him his oldest daughter, Leah, instead (29:15-26). Laban agreed to also give Rachel to Jacob as a wife if he would work another seven years (29:27). Without hesitation, Jacob agreed to work another seven years for Laban to receive Rachel as his wife, but many problems arose from this polygamous relationship when Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (29:30). "When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he enabled her to have children, but Rachel could not conceive. So Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, 'The Lord has noticed my misery, and now my husband will love me'" (29:31-32, NLT). Following the birth of Reuben, Leah gave birth to three more sons and she thought that the birth of each son would cause Jacob to notice her, but he did not (29:33-35).

Rachel became envious of her sister, Leah, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!" (30:1). Jacob became angry at Rachel's demand and responded, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" (30:2). The child-bearing issue becomes a source of contention for Leah and Rachel so they begin using their maids as surrogates (30:3-21). In this culture, a surrogate giving birth while sitting on the knees of the wife was symbolic of the wife giving her husband a child. Rachel's maid Bilhah, conceived Dan and Naphtali (30:3-8) while Leah's maid Zilpah gave birth to Gad and Asher (30:9-13). There is a break in the story when Reuben, Jacob's oldest son through Leah, finds mandrakes (orange colored fruit) in the field and brings them to his mother (30:14a). Mandrakes were superstitiously viewed as a fruit which resulted in fertility, so when Reuben brought them to Leah, Rachel asked her sister for some of the mandrakes in hopes that she could get pregnant (30:14b). Leah responded to Rachel's request in anger saying, "Wasn't it enough that you stole my husband? Now will you steal my son's mandrakes, too?" (30:15a, NLT). Rachel then said to Leah, "I will let Jacob sleep with you tonight if you give me some of the mandrakes" (30:15b, NLT). Agreeing to the bargain with Rachel, Leah slept with Jacob that night and gave birth to a fifth son who she named Issachar (30:16-18). Leah also gave birth to a sixth son, Zebulun, and she hoped that this son would cause Jacob to dwell with her (30:19-20). "Then God remembered Rachel's plight and answered her prayers by enabling her to have children. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. 'God has removed my disgrace,' she said. And she named him Joseph, for she said, 'May the Lord add yet another son to my family'" (30:22-24). The actions of Leah and Rachel show the dangers caused by envy and jealousy.

Dear God, keep me from envy and jealousy.

Genesis 30:25-43

Jacob married two of Laban's daughters, Leah and Rachel, and he had worked a total of 14 years to earn their hands in marriage (29:15-30). Although Jacob had been deceived into marrying Leah (29:15-26), he faithfully fulfilled his commitment so that he could rightfully marry Rachel (29:27-30). Since God never intended for men to have more than one wife, Jacob experienced much hardship in his relationships with these two sisters (29:31-30:24). Rachel's barrenness and Leah's feelings of being unloved by Jacob caused many problems in the family. When Jacob's commitment to Laban had finally been completed and Rachel had given birth to Joseph (30:22-24), Jacob decided that it was time to take his family and depart from Haran to return to the land of Canaan (30:25). Canaan was the land God had given to Jacob and he was determined to take his family back there so that they could settle in the land that God had promised to him through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3).

When Jacob approached Laban to ask for permission to return to Canaan (30:26), Laban responded by asking him to stay because he knew that he had been blessed for the sake of Jacob (30:27). Laban's request further highlighted his selfishness. He only wanted Jacob to stay so that he could acquire more wealth and possessions. Jacob agreed to stay with Laban and said, "Don't give me anything. Just do this one thing, and I'll continue to tend and watch over your flocks. Let me inspect your flocks today and remove all the sheep and goats that are speckled or spotted, along with all the black sheep. Give these to me as my wages" (30:31-32, NLT). The animals marked as such would not be a big loss to Laban since they were often the least desirable. Jacob's choice of the spotted, speckled, and black animals also enabled them to keep their flocks separate (30:33). Upon making this agreement with Jacob (30:34), Laban "...went out and removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted or had white patches, and all the black sheep. He placed them in the care of his own sons, who took them a three-days' journey from where Jacob was" (30:35-36). The actions of Laban were an attempt to make sure that Jacob's flock would not experience significant growth. Although Laban limited Jacob's flock, Jacob's background with animals guided him to use a breeding method which increased his flock and made him more prosperous than Laban (30:37-43). Laban's deceitful practices were finally repaid with Jacob's skill and dependence on God (31:7, 9).

Dear God, help me not to be characterized by selfishness.

Genesis 31:1-55

Laban's sons reported to him (31:1) that Jacob had become prosperous and that his flocks had multiplied abundantly (30:43); however, this news did not please Laban and Jacob noticed his resentment toward him (31:2). "Then the Lord said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you'" (31:3). Jacob obeyed the voice of the Lord by gathering up his family and explaining to them that Laban had continually mistreated him by changing his wages multiple times (31:4-7); furthermore, Jacob explained to Leah and Rachel that their father was angry at him concerning the recent prosperity of his flocks (31:8-9). He assured his family that God would be with them in their move to Canaan and that He was already showing Himself faithful by causing Jacob's flocks to grow in spite of Laban's attempts to keep him from prospering (31:10-13). Leah and Rachel were concerned about how this strained relationship would affect their inheritance (31:14-16a), but they submitted to Jacob's leadership and affirmed that they had seen God at work in the situation (31:16b).

Upon hearing the supporting words of his wives, Jacob gathered his family, livestock, and all his possessions to make the journey toward Canaan (31:17-18), but as they were leaving, Rachel stole Laban's idols which showed that there was much pagan influence in Laban's family (31:19). These idols would have supposedly brought protection to the house of Laban and their absence would bring great concern. Although Rachel's reasoning for stealing the idols are not evident, it would cause a dangerous situation for the family as they secretly departed (31:20). Three days later when Laban became aware of Jacob's departure, he pursued after them but God had warned him in a dream to leave Jacob alone (31:22-25). Laban finally caught up with them and rebuked Jacob for departing without a proper sendoff (31:26-29), but when Laban mentioned his stolen idols, Jacob, not realizing that Rachel had stolen them, demanded that the person who did such a thing be put to death (31:30-32). After a thorough search and another act of deceit by Rachel, Laban was not able to locate the stolen idols Rachel was hiding (31:33-35). Rachel's actions had caused a major conflict between her husband and father. Jacob was very angry with Laban and complained to him about the unfair treatment he had received over the last twenty years, even though he had loyally worked for him (31:36-41). Jacob realized that if it were not for God's intervention, Laban would have sent him with nothing (31:42). Following this exchange of words, Laban and Jacob decided to make a covenant (31:43-55). Jacob agreed not to harm Laban's daughters (31:50) and they both committed not to harm each other or cross over the established boundaries (31:51-54). Although this circumstance seems chaotic, God was unfolding His plan by beginning to form His people and establish boundaries for the land that Israel would inherit.

Dear God, thank You for bringing about Your plan, even in the midst of chaos.

Genesis 32:1-21

Jacob, son of Isaac and brother of Esau, had faced much opposition over the last several years of his life. There had been much conflict with his father-in-law, Laban (Genesis 29:1-30), and Jacob's two wives, Leah and Rachel, were envious of each other which had resulted in unstable relationships (Genesis 27:30-28:9). Jacob had overcome many of these obstacles and departed from Haran to return to the land of Canaan. As Jacob was on his way to Canaan, he saw the angels of God and he declared the place to be called Mananaim, which meant two camps (32:1-2). Jacob probably intended one camp to symbolize his family and the other camp to symbolize God's protective camp over his family. God sent the angels to bring comfort and assurance to Jacob as he entered back into Canaan. One of the obstacles Jacob would face upon entering Canaan was his twin brother, Esau. Jacob and Esau's relationship had been unhealthy from birth, but God had chosen Jacob as the son of Isaac who would carry on the Abrahamic covenant.

In anticipation of a possible conflict with Esau, Jacob sent messengers ahead to speak peace to Esau (32:3-5), but when the messengers returned saying that Esau was coming with 400 men, Jacob became "greatly afraid and distressed" (32:6-7a). It is likely that Jacob recalled Esau's threat to kill him after Jacob had stolen his blessing (Genesis 27:41). Jacob immediately went into action and divided the people traveling with him into two companies saying, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape" (32:7b-8). The situation also caused Jacob to pray to God for protection so that His promises could be fulfilled (32:9-12). The last time a prayer of Jacob was recorded was twenty years ago when he worshiped God at Bethel (Genesis 28:20-22). Jacob should have put his trust in God and His promises, but fear consumed him so he attempted to appease Esau by sending him extravagant gifts (32:13-21). The prayer of Jacob showed a man that wanted to trust God with his life, but Jacob's actions revealed that he was still holding on to control.

Dear God, help me to not only trust You with my words, but also my actions.

Genesis 32:22-32

As the gifts were being delivered to Esau (32:21) out of fear for his life, Jacob lodges for the night and when he awoke from his sleep, he sent his family across the stream (32:22-23); however, before Jacob crossed the stream himself, "a Man wrestles with him until the breaking of the day" (32:24). When the Man "...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" (32:25). The Man battling against Jacob asked to be let go, but Jacob refused to quit until this Man blessed him (32:26). "'What is your name?' the man asked. He replied, 'Jacob.' 'Your name will no longer be Jacob,' the Man told him. 'From now on you will be called Israel, because you have fought with God and with men and have won'" (32:27-28, NLT).

Jacob's all-night wrestling match with an unknown attacker, whom Jacob later discovered was God (32:29), ended with his name being changed to "Israel" which was significant in this culture. Since a person's name was tied to their character, the changing of a Jacob's name also meant a change of character or direction for Jacob. The name, Jacob, means deceiver or heel grabber and indicated that he would spend much of his life manipulating and lying to get his own way. This was true of Jacob. Jacob's new name meant "God fights" or "He struggles with God." The name change was significant in two ways.

First, Jacob overcoming God in this fight would give him confidence in his struggles with men. Secondly, his name would give the nation of Israel future confidence in their battles with opposing nations. Jacob was overwhelmed with God's blessing upon him and the preservation of his life so he changed the name of the location where he fought with God to Peniel, meaning *face of God* (32:30). Jacob eventually emerged from the battle with God with a blessing from God, but he would carry a limp (32:31) with him for the rest of his life (see 32:25). His limp would be a constant reminder that overcoming does not lie in physical strength, but in his faith in God.

Dear God, increase my faith in You.

Genesis 33:1-20

Jacob had decided to quit working for his deceitful father-in-law, Laban, and took his family to the land of Canaan (Genesis 31), which is the land God had promised to both Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) and Isaac (Genesis 26). Before entering the land, Jacob feared once again facing his brother, Esau, whom he had deceived into selling his birthright (Genesis 27). Jacob's fears were confirmed when it was reported to him that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men, so he sent many gifts ahead of him to hopefully appease Esau (Genesis 32:1-21). But before he could cross over the brook to meet Esau, Jacob wrestled with God throughout the night and was eventually given a blessing by Him (Genesis 32:22-32). God also changed Jacob's name to Israel which indicated that he had fought with God and that God would eventually fight for the nation of Israel.

Jacob finally was coming face to face with Esau so he divided his family into three groups: maidservants and their children, Leah and her children, and then Rachel with Joseph (33:1-2). The order of the groups indicated that Jacob favored Rachel. When Jacob crossed over before the family groups, he showed respect and humility by bowing himself seven times (33:3), but Esau "ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept" (33:4). It appears that the 21 years Jacob and Esau were apart brought healing and maturity in their relationship and there was no need for Jacob to fear Esau. Jacob introduced his family to Esau (33:5-7) and then explained that the gifts he had sent were to find favor with him (33:8). Esau insisted that Jacob keep the gifts, but Jacob wanted Esau to have them as an expression of God's gracious dealings with him (33:9-11). God had used time to bring healing and change to the heart of Esau. The change in Esau's heart was even more evident when he offered to accompany Jacob on his journey to Canaan, but Jacob refused to allow this to happen out of fear that something may happen to Esau's people (33:12-16). Jacob then journeyed to Succoth (33:17) and on to Shechem, which is Canaan (33:18). There in Canaan he purchased a piece of land from the children of Hamor for 100 pieces of money (33:19). This piece of land was the place where Abraham first erected an altar as an act of worship when God promised to give him the land (12:6-7) and now Jacob built an altar there (33:20). He called it El Elohe Israel, which meant God is the God of Israel. God's promise of a nation and land was being fulfilled right before Jacob's eyes.

Dear God, thank You for keeping Your promises, even when the fulfillment needs to be awaited.

Genesis 34:1-31

Jacob had finally entered the land of Canaan after his long journey from Haran. Canaan is the land which God had promised to Abraham and also to Jacob's father, Isaac. Although Jacob had experienced much hardship and opposition in his lifetime, God was beginning to fulfill His promise of a great nation/land (Genesis 12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (Genesis 12:2b), and a great name (Genesis 12:2c). As Jacob settled in Canaan, Jacob experienced his first hardship involving the Canaanites who inhabited the land God had promised to give Abraham's descendants. Dinah (30:21), daughter of Jacob and Leah, took a journey into the city to see how the Canaanite women lived (34:1), but there she encountered Shechem, son of Hamor, who raped her (34:2). Shechem was strongly attracted to Dinah (34:3), so he asked his father to get her for him as a wife (34:4). Jacob received news that Dinah had been raped, but decided to hold off on a reaction until his sons returned from working in the field (34:5). In the meantime, Hamor came to speak with Jacob concerning a possible marriage between his son, Shechem, and Dinah (34:6). Jacob's sons finally returned from the fields having heard about their sister being raped and they were very angry about this disgraceful thing which had been done (34:7). Hamor attempted to speak civilly with Jacob and his sons saying, "And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves" (34:8-9). Ultimately, Hamor attempted to bring harmony between both groups of people (34:10), but he really just desired to take over Jacob's possessions (34:23).

Hamor continued to try to make a deal with Jacob and his sons so that Shechem could take Dinah as his wife (34:11-12). Jacob's sons finally came up with the requirement that all males should be circumcised just as the Israelites were circumcised (34:13-17). This condition was satisfactory to Hamor and Shechem so all the Canaanite males were circumcised according to the word of Hamor (34:18-24). In reality, the sons of Jacob had concocted a plan to kill all the males while they were still in pain from their circumcision and rescue their sister, Dinah (see 34:13). Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, led the massacre against the Canaanites as well as vengeance on Hamor and Shechem for what had been done to their sister (34:25-26). Jacob's other sons plundered the city (34:27) and took the women and children as captives (34:28-29). The actions of his sons caused Jacob to fear for the safety of him and his family (34:30); however, Jacob's sons expressed that the rape of their sister could not go unpunished (34:31). Even though punishment was justifiable for Hamor, Jacob's sons had no right to allow their anger to be turned against the innocent. For their unbridled actions, Simeon and Levi would later be overlooked in Jacob's blessing (Genesis 49:5-7).

Dear God, may I be merciful to others as You have been merciful to me.

Genesis 35:1-29

Jacob had finally settled in the land of Canaan, but his family's interaction with the locals proved to be dangerous (Genesis 34). Jacob and Leah's daughter, Dinah, was raped by Shechem (34:2), but Jacob's sons would not allow this atrocity to go unpunished. Not only did they murder Shechem and his father, Hamor, but they also plundered the entire city and took the women and children captive (34:25-29). Jacob was frightened by the actions of his sons and feared that the other inhabitants of the land would soon kill him and his family (34:30); however, Jacob's sons remained convinced that their actions were justifiable (34:31). Jacob would later leave Simeon and Levi out of his blessing for leading the way in this massacre (Genesis 49:5-7).

Jacob had been residing in Canaan for approximately a decade when God commanded him to return to Bethel (35:1), the place where God had covenanted with Abraham to give his descendants a great nation/land (Genesis 12:2a; 15:7), a great blessing (Genesis 12:2b), and a great name (Genesis 12:2c). Jacob was to build an altar at Bethel (35:1), so in an attempt to cleanse his family spiritually he commanded that all foreign gods be put away (35:2-4). This move would be characterized by purity and cleansing. Jacob and his family journeyed to Bethel under the protecting hand of God (35:5) and there he built an altar to the Lord (35:6-7). As Jacob affirmed his loyalty to God (35:7), God appeared to him and reaffirmed His promise of making a great nation (35:11) and giving them a land with many descendants (35:12). In response to God's reaffirming of the covenant, Jacob and God talked together in that place called Bethel (35:13-15).

After Jacob's encounter with the presence of God, they journeyed from Bethel, but Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin (35:16-18). Rachel was buried in Bethlehem and Jacob set a pillar on her grave (35:19-20). Following Rachel's death, Moses writes a little side note concerning Reuben, Jacob's eldest son, sleeping with his father's concubine, Bilhah (35:21). Reuben's actions eventually caused him to lose his inheritance, which was rightly due to the eldest son (Genesis 49:3-4). After this side note, Moses provides a list of Jacob's twelve sons, who would later become the firstfruits of the great nation of Israel (35:22b-26). Genesis 35 concludes by detailing the death of Jacob's father, Isaac (180 years old), who was living in Hebron (35:27-29). The death of Isaac marks a major transition in the history of Israel and leaves Jacob as the one who God would use to fulfill His promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). In order for God to continue His work, Jacob would need to have faith in God.

Dear God, help me to follow Your leading in my life even when circumstances are against me.

Genesis 36:1-37:36

Following the death of Isaac (Genesis 35:27-29), Jacob and Esau's father, the genealogy of Esau is recounted in Genesis 36. It is very clear that Moses' intention throughout the chapter is showing how God moved Esau out of the promised land and began establishing the land for Jacob and his descendants (36:6-8). Jacob's settling in Canaan was a direct fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 15, and Genesis 17. Although there is great detail of Esau's genealogy in Genesis 36, the focus of the rest of Genesis remains on the descendants of Jacob and particularly Jacob's son, Joseph.

Seventeen year old Joseph, son of Jacob and Rachel (Genesis 30:22-24), was feeding the flock with his brothers, but he brought back a bad report of them to his father (37:1-2). The details of Joseph's report are not provided, but it is revealed that Jacob loved Joseph more than all of his other sons; in fact, Jacob had given Joseph a coat of many colors which signified him as the future leader of the household (37:3). This coat was usually reserved for the eldest son, but Jacob favored Joseph causing all of his brothers to hate him (37:4). To make matters worse, Joseph also had dreams (two dreams recorded here) which were interpreted as Joseph ruling over all of his brothers (37:8-10). These dreams caused Joseph's brothers to hate him even more, but Jacob pondered their meaning (37:11).

The brothers depart to Shechem to feed their father's flocks and Jacob (Israel) later sends Joseph to check on them (37:12-14). Through the help of a stranger, Joseph discovered that his brothers had made their way 15 miles north to Dothan (37:15-17). When Joseph's brothers saw him coming afar off, "they conspired against him to kill him" (37:18). Their internal hatred and bitterness against Joseph had caused them to find a way to permanently remove their brother from their life. They decided to kill him, throw him in a pit, and tell their father that Joseph had been devoured by wild animals (37:19-20); however, Reuben advised them to just throw him in a pit (37:21-22). When Joseph finally arrived, they stripped him of his coat of many colors and threw him into a pit (37:23-24). As they sat down to eat, a group of Ishmaelites (traders) passed by on their way to Egypt and they decided to follow the advice of Judah, who recommended that they sell Joseph as a slave instead of killing him (37:25-28). With Joseph out of their life, they now devised a plan to cover up what they had done. They took Joseph's coat of many colors, killed a goat, and dipped the coat in the goat's blood to make it look like Joseph had been killed by wild animals (37:31). When they took the coat to their father, Jacob mourned for many days and could not be comforted by anyone (37:32-35). What happened to Joseph? The traders sold him to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard (37:36). Joseph was now far from home because his brothers' hatred and envy had taken over their lives.

Dear God, protect me from hatred, envy, and bitterness.

Genesis 38:1-30

Although it may seem odd for Moses (author of Genesis) to deviate from the story of Joseph, the following events take place at the same time that Joseph became a slave in Egypt (Genesis 37:36). Joseph's brothers were responsible for selling their younger brother into slavery because they had a great hatred for him (37:4-11). In order to cover up their actions, they told their father, Jacob, that Joseph had been devoured by wild animals (37:31-35). Now that Joseph was gone and Reuben (Genesis 36:22; 49:3-4), Simeon, and Levi (Genesis 34:25-31; 49:5-7) were left out of Jacob's blessing, Judah was seemingly the one who would inherit the blessings of the firstborn. Judah eventually left his brothers and took a Canaanite woman (Shua) as his wife and they had three sons - Er, Onan, and Shelah (38:1-5). Judah took Tamar as a wife for his son, Er, but he was "wicked in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord killed him" (38:6-7). No explanation is given about his actions. According to the law of levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-10), Er's brother, Onan, was required to marry Tamar but he refused to do so and was also killed by the Lord (38:8-10).

Judah then asked Tamar to stay in his home until his youngest son, Shelah, was old enough to marry her (38:11); however, when Shelah was old enough to marry Tamar, Judah failed to give Shelah as her husband. Fearing that she would not have an heir, Tamar disguised herself as a prostitute and seduced Judah into sleeping with her (38:12-16a). Tamar, disguised as a prostitute, demanded that Judah pay her with a young goat from his flock, but until the goat could be sent to her, Judah gave her his signet, cord, and his staff (38:16b-19). These three items were identification credentials that men in the ancient Near East possessed. After Judah slept with Tamar, Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend so that his signet, cord, and staff could be returned to him but Judah's friend could not locate the prostitute (38:20-23). Three months passed and it was revealed to Judah that Tamar, his daughter-in-law, was with child and he demanded that the man responsible for this should be burned (38:24). "But as they were taking her out to kill her, she sent this message to her father-in-law: 'The man who owns these things made me pregnant. Look closely. Whose seal and cord and walking stick are these?'" (38:25, NLT). Judah immediately recognized that the items were his and he confessed his neglect in giving her Shelah as a husband (38:26). Judah's wicked character had been revealed. Tamar eventually gave birth to twins, Perez and Zerah (38:27-30). Although this story is messy, the messianic line came through Perez, who was born of prostitution and incest. His line would eventually go through King David whose line would result in the birth of Jesus Christ, our Savior (Matthew 1:3).

Dear God, protect my character and help me to make decisions which would be pleasing to You.

Genesis 39:1-23

Jacob's favorite son, Joseph (37:3), had been sold into slavery by his brothers because they hated him (37:1-11). They covered up their crime by making it look like Joseph had been devoured by wild animals (37:31-33). Jacob was devastated by the loss of the son that he loved more than any of his other children (37:34-35). Although it looked as if Joseph would be gone forever, Moses carefully follows Joseph's journey as he was sold by the Midianites, who had purchased Joseph from his brothers, to Potiphar(37:36). Potiphar was an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard in Egypt. Genesis 39 continues the story of Joseph in Egypt. Thus far, Joseph's life seemed like one hardship after another; however, Moses (author of Genesis) reminds the reader that the "Lord was with Joseph..." (39:2a). He became a successful man in Potiphar's house and Potiphar even noticed that the Lord's hand was on Joseph causing everything he did to prosper (39:2-3). Rather than being angry about his circumstances, Joseph worked hard and Potiphar eventually made him overseer of his entire house (39:4). The Lord blessed Potiphar's house for the sake of Joseph (39:5-6a).

Along with being a hard worker, Moses also points out that Joseph was handsome in appearance (39:6b). The reason for inserting this fact about Joseph becomes apparent when Joseph catches the eye of Potiphar's wife, who attempts to seduce Joseph into sleeping with her (39:7). Day after day Joseph resisted her advances saying, "Look, my master does not know what *is* with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you *are* his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (39:8-9). His response to Potiphar's wife shows the tremendous character of Joseph and his desire to obey God. When Joseph refused to sleep with her, she became angry and accused him of trying to rape her (39:10-15). When Potiphar heard about Joseph's supposed actions, he became irate and threw Joseph into prison (39:16-20).

Rather than giving up or getting angry at his circumstances, Moses writes that, "...the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who *were* in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything *that was* under *Joseph's* authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made *it* prosper" (39:21-23). Joseph continued to do right, even though circumstances seemed to be against him.

Dear God, may my life not be governed by circumstances, but by faith in Your plan.

Genesis 40:1-23

Joseph's life had been filled with trials and with each hardship he had the opportunity to become angry or bitter, but he chose to stay faithful to God's plans. He was hated by his brothers (37:4), sold as a slave by his wicked brothers (37:27-28), and ended up as a servant to Potiphar, officer of Pharaoh, in Egypt (37:36). While serving Potiphar, Joseph found favor with him and rose to a position of authority (39:1-6) until Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of rape and had him thrown into prison (39:7-20). The Lord was with Joseph during his imprisonment (39:21) and he rose to a position of authority while he was in prison (39:22-23). During Joseph's imprisonment, Pharaoh's butler (cupbearer) and baker were thrown into prison and Joseph became responsible for taking care of them (40:1-4). One night the cupbearer and baker both had dreams and when they awoke from their dreams they were very sad because there was no interpretation (40:5-8a). Joseph noticed their sad countenance and discovered that their dreams were bothering them so he told them that interpretations belong to God (40:8b). They told their dreams to Joseph, who was familiar with interpreting dreams (see Genesis 37:5-11), and he listened to each of them describe their dream. The cupbearer detailed his dream (40:9-11) and Joseph revealed that in three days he would be restored to his former position before Pharaoh (40:12-13). Joseph then appealed to the cupbearer saying, "And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place. For I was kidnapped from my homeland, the land of the Hebrews, and now I'm here in prison, but I did nothing to deserve it" (40:14-15, NLT). After interpreting the cupbearer's dream, Joseph interpreted the dream of the baker, but the interpretation was not good news for him. Joseph revealed that in three days Pharaoh would behead him, hang him on a tree, and leave his body for the birds to eat (40:16-19). Three days later, all that Joseph had said came to pass. The cupbearer was restored to his duties before Pharaoh (40:20-21) while the baker was put to death (40:22). When the cupbearer resumed his position before Pharaoh, he forgot about Joseph and failed to ask for his release as Joseph had requested him to do (40:23; see also 40:14-15). Joseph had every right to be angry at his circumstance, but he always seems to embrace God's plan and patiently wait for the next step in his journey. Joseph was a man who was guided by faith and not his circumstances.

Dear God, may my faith in You overcome any obstacles which enter my life.

Genesis 41:1-57

From a very young age, Joseph had experienced many trials. His own brothers hated him (Genesis 37:1-11) and eventually sold him to slave traders (Genesis 37:12-35). Those traders sold Joseph "...in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard" (37:36). Joseph worked hard for Potiphar and rose to a position of authority (39:1-6a) before Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of attempted rape, which landed Joseph in prison (39:6b-23). While Joseph was imprisoned, he interpreted dreams for two other men who were also in prison and his interpretations came true (40:1-23). Two years had passed since Joseph's interpretations came to pass (41:1a). Joseph was still in prison, but the chief butler (cupbearer), whose dream Joseph interpreted in prison, had been released and restored to his duties before Pharaoh. Around this time Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had two dreams (41:1b-7) which troubled his spirit (41:8). No one in Egypt could interpret his dreams (41:8b), but the king's cupbearer remembered that Joseph had interpreted his dream (41:9-13), so Pharaoh sent for him (41:14-15). When he appeared before Pharaoh, Joseph was careful to say that only God could bring the interpretation of his dreams (41:16). Pharaoh retold both dreams to Joseph (41:17-24) and he revealed their meaning (41:25-32).

Both dreams predicted that Egypt would experience seven years of bountiful harvest (41:29) followed by seven years of very severe famine (41:30).

In order to survive the upcoming famine, Joseph advised Pharaoh to select a "discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt" (41:33). Furthermore, this hand-picked man should "...appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt" (41:34-36, NLT). Upon hearing Joseph's advice, Pharaoh immediately declared that Joseph should be the one to lead Egypt through this coming time of famine and he set him over the land of Egypt (41:37-45).

At the young age of thirty, Joseph put his plan into action to prepare for the upcoming famine and it worked flawlessly (41:46-49). During the seven years of bountiful harvest, two sons were born to Joseph, Manasseh and Ephraim (41:50-52). Then when the seven years of plenty ended, the famine occurred in all lands but the land of Egypt had food (41:53-54). Joseph carefully managed the food supply and sold to the Egyptians as well as people from other countries that were experiencing the effects of the famine (41:55-57). Even though Joseph had experienced pain and suffering throughout his 37 years of life, God was using each circumstance for good in Joseph's life. Rather than questioning God or getting angry, Joseph embraced his circumstances for the greater good.

Dear God, give me faith and perseverance like Joseph.

Genesis 42:1-38

Fifteen years had passed since Joseph had been sold into slavery by his angry brothers (Genesis 37). Their actions eventually led Joseph to Egypt where he became a slave to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh and captain of the guard (Genesis 37:36). Joseph quickly rose to a position of authority in Potiphar's house until he was falsely accused of rape by the wife of his master (Genesis 39). He was thrown into prison where he became known as an interpreter of dreams (Genesis 40), which eventually allowed him to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Joseph revealed that Pharaoh's dreams foretold seven years of bountiful harvest followed by seven years of famine throughout all the lands (Genesis 41). Pharaoh set Joseph over all of Egypt in order to help them survive the upcoming famine and his plan of action protected the Egyptians during this seven years of barrenness (Genesis 40:37-57).

The famine had also devastated the land of Canaan and Jacob, Joseph's father, sent his ten sons (except Benjamin) to Egypt to buy food (42:1-5). Since it was Joseph who sold food to any foreigner, his brothers stood before him but they did not recognize him (42:6). It had been fifteen years since they had seen Joseph and it is likely that he was dressed in Egyptian clothing. When the brothers approached Joseph, they bowed down before him and requested to buy food (see Genesis 37:5-8). Joseph immediately recognized his brothers but hid his identity and spoke harshly to them, accusing them of spying out the condition of the land (42:7-9). The brothers quickly denied that they were spies and told Joseph that they were honest men from Canaan whose father had sent them to buy food; furthermore, Joseph's brothers revealed that their father had twelve sons, but one of them was no longer with them (42:10-13). Of course, this one brother who was no longer with them was Joseph. Joseph continued to accuse them of being spies and demanded that they bring back their younger brother, Benjamin, to prove that they were telling the truth (42:14-15). Joseph put all of them in prison for three days and then released all but Simeon, who would not be released until the other brothers brought Benjamin back to Egypt (42:16-24). Before they departed, Joseph commanded that their sacks be filled with grain but he secretly had their money restored to each brother's sack (42:25). As they journeyed back to Canaan, they stopped to camp but discovered the money that they had taken to Egypt to buy food had been restored to their sacks and they became very fearful (42:26-28). Upon arriving home, the brothers told Jacob about their harrowing experience in Egypt and requested that he allow Benjamin to return with them to Egypt (42:29-35); however, Jacob would not entertain the thought of possibly losing another son so he refused to allow Benjamin to go with them to Egypt (42:36-38). The sins of Joseph's brothers were catching up with them and their guilty consciences were now causing them to fear God's judgment upon them, but God was still at work even in the midst of their sin.

Dear God, may I quickly confess and forsake my sin so that I will not experience continued judgment from You.

Genesis 43:1-34

The famine which had swept over Egypt and the entire region had caused Jacob to send his sons (except Benjamin) to Egypt to buy grain (Genesis 42); however, upon their arrival they faced Joseph, their brother, who had risen to a place of authority after interpreting Pharaoh's dreams (Genesis 42). Fifteen years had passed since their hatred for Joseph had resulted in selling him into slavery (Genesis 37), so they did not recognize that the man whom they were facing that day was their brother. Joseph spoke harshly to his brothers and accused them of spying out the barrenness of Egypt during the famine (Genesis 42:6-12). His brothers denied the accusations and claimed that their father had sent all of his sons, except Benjamin, to buy food in Egypt (42:13). Joseph eventually imprisoned Simeon and told the other sons of Jacob that he would be released when they returned from Canaan with their younger brother, Benjamin (42:14-24). When Joseph's brothers arrived home, they told Jacob what had happened but he refused to allow Benjamin to return with them to Egypt (42:25-38).

The famine continued until Jacob's family could no longer survive so he reluctantly sent Benjamin to Egypt with his other sons (43:1-10). Jacob also sent gifts and money to this "governor of Egypt" in hopes that he would release Simeon and permit Benjamin to return back to Canaan safely (43:11-14). The sons of Jacob took the gifts and Benjamin to Egypt and stood before Joseph again (43:15). "When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the manager of his household, 'These men will eat with me this noon. Take them inside the palace. Then go slaughter an animal, and prepare a big feast.' So the man did as Joseph told him and took them into Joseph's palace" (43:16-17, NLT). Joseph's brothers became fearful when they were brought into the palace and assumed it was because of the money which had been found in their sacks during the return journey to Canaan (43:18-23; see also Genesis 42:25-28). Joseph finally arrived to meet his brothers and they bowed before him, but Joseph was overcome with emotion upon seeing his younger brother, Benjamin, and retreated to his chambers until he could regain his composure (43:24-31). The meal finally began with Joseph sitting by himself because "...Egyptians despise Hebrews and refuse to eat with them" (43:32, NLT). "Joseph told each of his brothers where to sit, and to their amazement, he seated them according to age, from oldest to youngest" (43:33, NLT). His knowledge of their birth order should have provided a hint of his identity, but the brothers simply did not believe that their brother, Joseph, was alive. Each of Joseph's brothers were given food, but Benjamin was given a serving five times as much as the others (43:34). The fact that Joseph favored Benjamin was probably a test to see if envy or jealousy still existed with his brothers. Joseph's favoritism to Benjamin did not seem to bother the brothers because "...they feasted and drank freely with him" (43:34b, NLT). This meal would hopefully lead to a restoration between Joseph and his brothers.

Dear God, restore any relationships that have been broken in my life.

Genesis 44:1-34

The famine throughout all the lands had brought Jacob's sons to Egypt to buy grain (Genesis 42); however, the man in Egypt selling the food was their brother Joseph, whom they had sold into slavery over 20 years before (Genesis 37). They did not recognize their brother, Joseph, who accused them of coming to Egypt to spy out the barrenness of the land (Genesis 42:8-14). Joseph placed Simeon into prison and demanded that the other brothers return with Benjamin, the youngest brother, in order to prove that they were not spies (Genesis 42:15-24). When the brothers returned to Canaan, Jacob refused to allow Benjamin to return to Egypt with them (Genesis 42:25-38), but the famine eventually forced him to send Benjamin back to Egypt with them to buy food (Genesis 43:1-15). The brothers became fearful when Joseph requested that they come to the palace, but he was simply testing whether there had been a change of heart in each of them (43:16-34).

Following their meal with Joseph, he commanded the steward of the house to "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money" (44:1-2). When the brothers had departed from Egypt, Joseph sent his servant to pursue them and inquire if one of them had stolen his silver cup (44:3-6). The brothers immediately denied the accusations of the servant and declared that the one who stole it should be put to death (44:7-9). They were confident in their innocence. When each man opened his bag, the silver cup was discovered in Benjamin's sack and his brothers "tore their clothes" in agony over the possibility that he may be put to death (44:10-13). This situation was also a test for Joseph's brothers to see if they cared for their younger brother, Benjamin. Their compassion and love for Benjamin evidenced a change of heart and stands in contrast to the way that they treated Joseph many years ago (Genesis 37). All of Joseph's brothers returned to Egypt and stood before Joseph, who rebuked them for their deceit (44:14-15). Judah then spoke up and declared that they were suffering these judgments because of their guilt before God concerning their treatment of their brother, Joseph (44:16).

After listening to Judah's words, Joseph demands that Benjamin, the one "guilty" of stealing the cup, should remain and be his servant (44:17). Upon hearing Joseph's decision, Judah begged Joseph to free Benjamin and take him as a slave instead (44:18-34). Judah's plea before Joseph showed a change of heart in the brothers and demonstrated their great love for both Jacob and their younger brother, Benjamin.

Dear God, change the heart of those who have sinned against You. May they find forgiveness and hope for the future.

Genesis 45:1-28

For much of his youth, Joseph's life had been characterized by uncertainty and transition. At 17 years old (Genesis 37:2), he was sold into slavery by his brothers who had a great hatred for him (Genesis 37) because of their father's favoritism (Genesis 37:3). After becoming a slave in Egypt, Joseph found favor in the house of Potiphar until his wife accused Joseph of rape and had him thrown into prison (Genesis 39). In prison Joseph developed a reputation for interpreting dreams (Genesis 40) which eventually landed him before Pharaoh (Genesis 41). Joseph revealed that Pharaoh's dreams foretold of an upcoming famine, so he put Joseph in charge of sustaining Egypt during these seven years of barrenness. The severe famine caused Joseph's brothers to make a journey to Egypt in order to buy food but unbeknownst to them, they were standing before their brother whom they sold into slavery more than fifteen years earlier (Genesis 42). Joseph accused them of being spies and demanded that they bring back their younger brother, Benjamin, to prove that they were not spies. The brothers returned to Egypt with Benjamin and through a series of tests Joseph discovered that there had been a change of heart within his brothers (Genesis 43-44).

"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. And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard *it*" (45:1-2). Fear immediately struck his brothers (45:3), but Joseph comforted them saying, "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" (45:4-5). Furthermore, Joseph said to them, "...God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 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" (45:6-8). Rather than blaming God for his adverse circumstances throughout his life, Joseph recognized that God had used them to eventually preserve their family. Joseph commanded his brothers to return to Canaan and bring back their father, Jacob, as well as their families to Egypt so that they could survive the next five years of the famine (45:9-11). The brothers were in awe of God's protecting hand and they talked together with Joseph (45:12-15).

When Pharaoh heard of the reunion between Joseph and his brothers it pleased him and he demanded that they return to Egypt with their families, where they would receive the best of the land of Egypt (45:16-20). When they arrived in Canaan they said to their father, "Joseph *is* still alive, and he *is* governor over all the land of Egypt" (45:21-26a). Upon hearing this news, Jacob's "...heart stood still, because he did not believe them" (45:26b); however, "when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived" (45:27). Jacob then determined to go to Egypt so that he could see Joseph before he died (45:28). The story of Joseph had begun in tragedy, but was ending in celebration.

Dear God, give me the outlook of Joseph.

Genesis 46:1-47:31

After Jacob discovered that his son, Joseph, was alive in the land of Egypt, God appeared to him in a dream and said, "I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes" (46:1-4). Jacob obeyed the voice of the Lord and departed with his family from Canaan (46:5-7) around 1875 BC and they would remain there until the Exodus some 430 later (1445 BC). Genesis 46:8-27 records the names of 70 men from whom the nation of Israel would form. Jacob instructed his son Judah to go ahead of the caravan to meet Joseph so that he could direct them to Goshen, where they would settle away from the mainstream of Egyptian culture (46:28). Joseph departed to Goshen and was reunited with his father after 22 years of separation (46:29-30). Joseph's family would soon meet Pharaoh and he instructed them to say that they raised livestock because the Egyptians despised shepherds (46:31-34). This despised occupation would allow Joseph's family to settle in Goshen, which would be secluded and somewhat protect them from intermingling with the Egyptians. Joseph's plan worked and Pharaoh allowed them to settle in Goshen (47:1-12), which was also called Rameses (46:11) or Zoan (Psalm 78:12, 43).

After Joseph's family had settled themselves in the land of Goshen, Joseph turned his attention back to the famine which had become very severe (47:13). When all the money in Egypt had been used (47:14-15), Joseph began accepting livestock as payment for grain (47:16-17). The year ended and people had no money or cattle left so they began selling themselves and their land in exchange for food until Joseph had purchased all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, except the land owned by the priests (47:18-22). Joseph then instructed the people to begin planting seed, which he gave to them, and then they would give Pharaoh one-fifth of the yield as payment (47:23-24). The people rejoiced in Joseph's plan and declared that he had saved their lives (47:25-26).

Circumstances were a little different in Goshen where Joseph's family had settled. The Israelites prospered by the hand of God during the famine so that "...they had possessions and there and grew and multiplied exceedingly" (47:27). God's prospering of the Israelites was related to the promise He had made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years before his death came near (47:28) and he requested that Joseph would bury him in the family burial cave in Canaan (47:29-30). Joseph promised Jacob that he would be buried at the place of his request (47:31). God had been faithful to Jacob.

Dear God, thank You for being faithful even when circumstances may not seem like they are going my way.

Genesis 48:1-22

Because of the severe famine throughout the land (Genesis 42), Jacob and all of his family had departed from Canaan in order to reside in Egypt (Genesis 46-47). Joseph had risen to power in Egypt (Genesis 41) and God used him to preserve the forming nation of Israel. Furthermore, Pharaoh gave Joseph's family the land of Goshen and because Goshen was away from the mainstream it allowed them to settle in Egypt without being influenced by the culture. Jacob celebrated about being reunited with his son, Joseph, whom he believed was dead; however, the time of Jacob's death was near so he requested that Joseph bury him back in the land of Canaan (Genesis 47:29-31). After Joseph's promise to Jacob, his health began to fail and he took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to see Jacob before his death (48:1). Frail and nearly blind, Jacob sat up in his bed and said, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.' And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine" (48:2-5). Jacob's adoption of Joseph's two sons was an expression of gratitude and provided them with the same inheritance as his own sons.

Jacob called Joseph's two sons to him and pronounced a blessing on them, but the blessing of the firstborn was bestowed upon Ephraim instead of Manasseh, the oldest (48:6-16). Joseph attempted to correct Jacob's apparent mistake by switching Jacob's right hand of blessing to the head of Manasseh (48:17-18), but Jacob refused saying, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations" (48:19). Jacob then turns his attention to Joseph saying, "Behold, I am dying, but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers. Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow" (48:21-22). Through his words to Joseph, Jacob expressed his confidence that God would eventually return them to Canaan to inherit the land God had promised to them. Although Jacob's life had been filled with hardship, he trusted that God would fulfill His promise, even if he never lived to see it come to pass.

Dear God, give me faith like Jacob.

Genesis 49:1-50:26

Jacob's life was about to end so he called together his sons and told them what would happen to each one of them in the future (49:1-2). The descendants of **Reuben**, Jacob's firstborn, would not prosper (49:3-4) because he had sinned against his father by sleeping with his concubine (Genesis 35:22). Not one of his descendants became a leader in Israelite history and there is almost no mention of his tribe. **Simeon and Levi** were known as men of violence (Genesis 34:25-29) and both of their tribes would be scattered (49:5-7), although Levi's descendants would eventually become the priestly tribe. **Judah** would dominate his enemies and his brothers would praise him; furthermore, his descendants would rise to national leadership including David, Solomon, and the soon-coming Messiah, referred to here as Shiloh (49:8-12). This Messiah (Jesus Christ) would be called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah in Revelation 5:5. Judah's tribe would be blessed and prosperous. **Zebulun's** descendants would benefit from sea traders moving through her land (49:13). **Issachar**, although strong, would work for others (49:14-15). The tribe of **Dan** was raised up to be judges, but they would not be faithful (49:16-18). **Gad** would settle in a place where they would be subject to attackers, but they would prevail (49:19). **Asher** would settle in a fertile area and provide rich food (49:20). **Naphtali's** tribe would be known for speed and agility, but also for their beautiful words (49:21). Most of Jacob's blessing would fall upon **Joseph**, and his two sons, who would experience victory (49:23-24) and prosperity (49:25-26). **Benjamin**, Jacob's youngest son, would produce a violent, warlike tribe whose future descendants included Saul and eventually Paul (49:27).

Following Jacob's prophetic words, he died and was buried alongside his wife as he had requested (49:28-50:13). After Jacob's burial in the land of Canaan, Joseph and his brothers returned to Egypt but "...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'" (50:15). Their sudden fear caused them to remind Joseph that their father had requested that he forgive them for their actions (50:15-17). When Joseph heard that they questioned his genuineness, he wept and said to them, "Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? 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. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones" (50:18-21). Joseph's words showed that he trusted in God's plan from the beginning and knew that his bad circumstances were orchestrated by God in order to spare the lives of many. Joseph lived until the age of 110, but before his death he reminded his brothers of God's promise to bring them into the land of Canaan (50:22-26). Even in his death, Joseph embraced the promises of God and was faithful to Him until he took his last breath.

Dear God, thank You for giving me the example of Joseph, who was faithful to You until the day he died. May I be faithful as Joseph was faithful.