



THE PATTERN THE PROBLEM

GENESIS

& THE PROMISE

GENESIS

	Term 1	Passage	
The Pattern	Week 1	Genesis 1:1-2:3	In the Beginning, God
	Week 2	Genesis 2:4-25	Relationships
The Problem	Week 3	Genesis 3	The Fall
	Week 4	Genesis 4-11	Outside the Garden
The Promise	Week 5	Genesis 12-17	The Turning Point (The Promise)
	Week 6	Genesis 18-24	Faith in the Promise
	Week 7	Genesis 25-30	Jacob I Loved
	Week 8	Genesis 31-38	Messy Families
	Week 9	Genesis 37-42	In the Pit
	Week 10	Genesis 43-50	To Save Many Lives

3-1-1 Prayer

We all care for friends and family who don't know Jesus and this should be reflected in our prayers. List below the names of 3 such people you can be praying for once a week for one minute.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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What is the goal of these notes?

The goal is to grow your ability to read the bible. Bible reading is essential to Christian growth and survival but it's a skill that only develops with practice. Indeed because of the spiritual apathy that's part of our fallen nature the desire to read only grows with practice! The bible is an extraordinary book. It has changed people, nations and the flow of history. That's unsurprising since it's God's book and contains God's wisdom for life. Yet, bible reading in some ways is no different to reading any other book. These notes will assist you in developing skills which will increasingly enable you to feed yourself from the bible and help others do the same.

Three ways to use these notes

1. Personal reading

Use this guide to help you read your Bible every day. Scribble down your thoughts and questions each day, and remember to pray asking God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His word.

2. Growth Groups

Use the section at the end of each week to prepare for your Growth Group. Take this guide with you to your Growth Group each week so you can write down prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group. Let your group know who you are on mission to.

3. Church

Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church. Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

GENESIS

Introduction: Genesis

The foundation of salvation history

Genesis sets the stage for God's work to save the world. We see a beautiful picture of the good way that the world was supposed to be (the **pattern**). Then we see the tragedy of human rebellion, and the ways this has ruined the world (the **problem**). But then we see the turning point of salvation history: the **promise** God makes to fix the world¹. The story of the rest of the Bible is the fulfilment of that promise, to fix all the effects caused by the problem, to bring us back to the goodness of the pattern.

Therefore, Genesis is a foundational book for understanding:

1. God and his relationship with his world;
2. Ourselves, our place in the world, and what has gone wrong; and
3. The shape of salvation history.

Genesis 1-11 and 12-50 are quite different. Chapters 1-11 provide the cosmic backdrop, showing that the God who calls Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is not just a little local deity, but rather the creator and sustainer of the entire universe. Chapters 12-50 are mainly concerned with the way God's call of Abraham results in a distinct nation belonging to God, Israel.

The Pattern - Genesis 1-2

In chapters 1-2, we see the pattern - the good way God made the world. And so, in these chapters, we learn so much about our world and its relationship to its creator. We see the difference between creator and creation, we learn about humanity - made in the image of God, male and female. And we learn about creation itself: it is ordered and good. We see themes of rest, work, gender, marriage, family, and humanity's role in creation. A good pattern from a good God!

¹ 'Salvation history' is a phrase that recognises what history really is: the story of God's plan and actions to bring salvation to the people he lovingly made, even though we have rebelled against him. So, all of history is 'salvation history', but especially the key events recorded for us in the Bible.

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The Problem - Genesis 3-11

Then, in chapters 3-11 we see the problem - what broke the world. We see the fall, as Adam and Eve disobey God's word. And we see the results - the spread of sin and death, spiralling ever worse. Envy, family breakdown, murder, pride. We see the need for judgement, and yet we see God's mercy. Despite our relentless evil, he still desires to save.

The Promise - Genesis 12-50

Genesis 12 is the turning point of the book, and the whole Bible. God makes a promise to Abraham, which is repeated to his son, then his son's son. While chapters 4-11 show the effects of the fall, from the promise in Genesis 12 onwards we see God reversing these effects: blessings (instead of curses), as God's people (instead of hiding from him), in a special place (like the garden).

This promise marks the beginning of the Israelite people. The rest of Genesis, and the rest of the Bible, is a testimony to God's faithfulness to his promises. It records how God brings these things about through his people, and often despite his people.

So we see what it looks like not to trust the promise, because even the heroes are sinful humans. But we also see what it looks like to trust the promise, and so obey. And we see God's faithfulness in beginning to fulfil that promise, through a messy family. We see God's people begin to grow in number, and enjoy God's blessing, as they begin the journey to the promised land. Through one person in particular - Joseph - we see how God can use this family to bring blessing and salvation (from famine) to many nations, through an innocent man who suffers unjustly - even 'dying' (in a pit), before being vindicated and raised to rule (in Egypt). And yet the book of Genesis ends with the promise not yet fulfilled, and the problem caused by sin not yet solved. We are reminded of this in Joseph's death. So the book of Genesis leaves us waiting for the one like Joseph, but greater still: Jesus, the ultimate fulfilment of the promise to Abraham.

Authorship

The Pentateuch, (which means 'Five Books'), of which Genesis is the first, was credited to Moses by universal tradition of the Jews, which Jesus takes for granted and endorses with his own authority (e.g., Mark 12:26; John 5:46, 47).

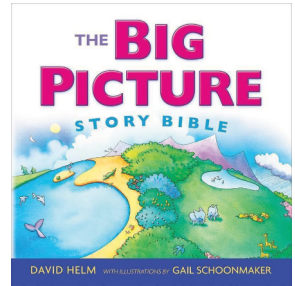
GENESIS

Book recommendation

These kids Bibles and books show how the Bible fits together into one story

This term through Genesis, we'll see how the whole Bible fits together. Alongside that, here are some fantastic kids Bibles and books that do that for children. Rather than just telling individual stories, they show how all the little stories are really one big story all about Jesus. They highlight the same things we'll see in Genesis: the pattern, the problem, and the promises, and they show how the rest of the Bible is the story of God keeping those promises. That's so helpful for our kids, and I reckon as a parent I've learned a thing or two as well.

Our top recommendation: **The Big Picture Story Bible** (David Helm) - best for ages 3-7. Clear, simple, beautiful. It's so good that every family with young children ought to have a copy.



Other options

It can be helpful to have a variety of kids Bibles. So, here are some other kids books and Bibles that show how the Bible fits together.

Story books (shorter - can be read in one sitting or a few sittings)



The Garden, the Curtain, and The Cross (Carl Laferton) - one sitting. Ages 3-6. See also the board book for ages 1-3.



The Biggest Story (Kevin De Young) - ten chapters. Ages 5-11.

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Kids Bibles



Biggest Story Bible Storybook (Kevin De Young). Ages 6-12. The story book above, but expanded into a fuller Bible with 104 chapters. The author says in the introduction that he is trying to explain what the stories mean rather than simply re-tell them. Abstract illustrations.



The Kingdom of God Bible Storybook (Tyler Van Halteren). Ages 6-12. Tries to stay close to the words of our adult Bibles where possible. Each chapter ends by showing how it points to Jesus. Really well illustrated.

You can also see other recommendations here: <https://evchurch.info/ev-kids-recommends/>

What one family does:

"In my family, we've stumbled on an easy way to teach our little ones the big truths. Our kids (5, 4, 0) have worked out that they can delay bedtime by getting us to read to them. So, on a normal night, they each get to choose a book to read. We've just tried to make sure there's a bunch of quality Christian kids books mixed in with the other books on their bookshelf. Most nights, one of their choices will be filled with truths from God's word. Someone has even already done the hard work of putting it into words they understand! And we finish with a bit from a kids Bible.

Sometimes there's a topic that we'd like our kids to know about from God's perspective, and we've found there's usually a great Christian kids book on it. We'll add that to our list of present ideas for the next occasion. Everyone's family is different, so there's a million different ways to approach it, but there's something we've found helpful in ours."

GENESIS

Genesis & Science?

Genesis gives the story of the origins of the world, the nations, and Israel. There is a noticeable difference between Genesis 1-11 and 12-50. While chapters 12-50 are mainly concerned with the Patriarchs of Israel and their transformation into a distinct nation belonging to God, chapters 1-11 provides the cosmic backdrop. The God who called Abraham is not just a local deity, but rather the creator and sustainer of the entire universe. Amen!

We often have many questions as we approach the opening 11 chapters. Was the world created in seven 24-hour days? Who did Cain marry? Is Evolution compatible with the Bible? And so on. How should we approach these tricky issues? Here are some suggested guidelines:

1. God can do anything. He can create a universe in six days if he wants to, and if he wants to do it another way, he can! Nothing, absolutely nothing, is beyond his power.
2. When we approach God's word, our attitude must be a willingness to act on or believe in what God says, regardless of how out of step this may be with society's beliefs. Many things that societies and scientists have been firmly convinced of are now thought to be ridiculous, and so it will be with many things that are today accepted as obvious facts. We want God's eternal truth to rule us, not the passing opinions of mere humans. Science can be a wonderful servant, but it is not our master.
3. We must be generous and patient with each other, because we are called to love. Sincere Christians come to different conclusions about these things, and it is not helpful to put people in boxes, or to become suspicious of people's motives, or to needlessly overstate issues. Pray and assume that we are all seeking to humbly submit to the word of God.
4. We need to discern carefully the main point of the text. Many of the arguments that revolve around these opening chapters of Genesis are over secondary issues. The result is that often the main point is missed. This also helps us to appreciate our unity in the things of highest importance, even when there are differing views on secondary issues.
5. There are two popular approaches to the creation account: They come under many names with intricate variations, but broadly speaking there is the:
 - a. **Literal/Historical approach**
This approach argues that the days are to be taken in the ordinary sense and that the account is the actual chronology of creation. The early chapters of Genesis are read as straightforward history.
 - b. **Literary approach**
Whilst accepting that God could create any way he likes, the literary approach

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argues that the intention of Genesis 1 is not to give a chronology of creation, but to highlight certain themes and events that relate to God, mankind and the world. Thus, the opening chapter is more like a hymn than a blow by blow historical account. Many of the details are seen as literary techniques that do not demand to be read as 'simple history' but still teach true things about God and history. For example, the sequence of days might convey God's wisdom and care in creating a good and ordered world, rather than being about the length of time taken.

So, both approaches seek to make the Bible their authority. Both are seeking to let the details of the text itself shape the way it is understood.

6. Having said this, there are two dangers that face all interpreters of these passages: *Excessive literalism*, and *excessive symbolism*.

Excessive literalism can deny the use of figurative or symbolic speech. For example, when Jesus says that Herod is a fox, what are we meant to understand? If we were excessively literal in our understanding, we will peep behind him to look for the fluffy tail! But we don't, because we understand that Jesus is speaking figuratively, symbolically. He is telling us that Herod is crafty and untrustworthy. Excessive literalism misunderstands the type of literature we are dealing with. It demands that the historical method is the only way to understand a passage, and can miss the rhythm and careful construction of the chapter. It is helpful to note that there is a rhythm to Genesis 1 much like that of a hymn. This alerts the reader to the possibility that we may be reading something more rich in literary techniques than a newspaper summary of events.

The other danger that faces the modern reader is **excessive symbolism**. In our desire to avoid the danger of excessive literalism (and perhaps to avoid ridicule from others or our culture), we can fall into the opposite danger of excessive symbolism. In doing this we deny the historical reality of a single living Adam, the fall of mankind through this one man, and so on.

The Bible makes it clear that the creation account has historical links. For example, there was a historical fall (Job 31:33; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Romans 5:12ff and 1 Timothy 2:14). Romans 5:12-21 is a very important passage. Paul insists that a real, historical sin was overcome by a real, historical redemption. If Adam's sin is reduced to a mere symbol, then the cross of Christ is reduced to a mere symbol. This is not the case. Rather, as Christ was a real man of history, so was Adam.

More important than all of these arguments is the Scriptures themselves. It is now time to let the Bible do the talking! May we each read it on its own terms, and read it humbly and prayerfully.

WEEK 1: GENESIS 1:1-23

This foundational chapter of the Bible has been so carefully crafted it has been likened to a poem or song. It explodes with truths that are essential to rightly understanding our Creator, his creation, and especially its most special part: ourselves. We see 'the pattern', life the way God purposed it to be in his good world.

Week 1: Day 1: The main character

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-15

1. Read quickly through Genesis 1:1-2:3, and note down words or phrases that are repeated several times:
2. Think about the words or phrases you noted down. Why do you think they are repeated so often? What might be the lessons about:
 - God
 - His creation
 - The message of this chapter
3. How should these truths shape the way you live today? (e.g., your prayers, priorities, fears, emotions, conversations, relationships)

PRAY: Thank you God that you are the main player in this chapter and in the world. Thank you for your power, wisdom, goodness, and your generosity in creating such a good world for us to live in. Please help me to trust and serve you above all.

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD

Day 2: Order and Purpose

READ Genesis 1

1. Some ancient stories portrayed the world's creation as the result of messy interactions between gods (war, love affairs, etc). What seems different about the Bible's account?

2. Some have pointed out patterns in the creation account. Where do you see the following sorts of things happening:

Separating

Filling

Purpose giving

3. Think of 3-5 words to describe the world God has made, based on this chapter?

4. How could your observations from Genesis today help you to trust God with your future and listen to him today?

PRAY: Thank God for his loving wisdom, displayed in the good and ordered world we live in. Ask him to help you to trust his loving wisdom for your future, and to help you to humbly listen to his loving wisdom about the best way to live in his world today.

WEEK 1: GENESIS 1:1-23

Day 3: Us

READ Genesis 1:24-31

For the first time, God calls his creation not just 'good' but 'very good'.

1. Compare the things said about animals (verses 24-25) to the things said about humans (verses 26-31). What is similar, and what is different?
2. What can we learn about ourselves as humans from these verses?
3. What purpose(s) does God give humanity? (See 1:26, 28, and 2:15)
4. How does this compare to the way you see yourself? In what way do you need to update your view of yourself or other humans?

PRAY: Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens, and we are so small. Yet you have chosen to set your love especially on human beings like me, and to give us value beyond anything else in creation. Thank you for your loving care. Please help me today to serve you and glorify your majestic name.

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD

Day 4: The Image of God

READ Genesis 1:26-31

1. One of the most important truths in understanding humans is that we are made “in the image of God.” Look up as many of these verses as time permits, and consider how they might help us understand this powerful truth:

- Genesis 1:26. (“so that”)
- Genesis 5:3.
- Genesis 9:6. (Are we still image bearers even after humanity has sinned against God? What are the moral implications of being in God’s image?)
- 2 Corinthians 4:4
- 2 Corinthians 3:18
- Romans 8:29

2. What are the implications of this massive truth? Consider

- Where our worth is found
- How humans and human life should be treated
- Our future
- Growing as a Christian to be more like Jesus

PRAY: Praise God for creating us to represent him in his world, and thank him for giving us a status and worth that does not come from our abilities or achievements. Ask for help to treat each person with the dignity they deserve as an image bearer of God. And ask for his Spirit to transform you to be more like Jesus so that you will more fully reflect God’s true image each day.

WEEK 1: GENESIS 1:1-23

Day 5: The Rest

READ Genesis 2:1-3

1. What can you learn about rest and work from these verses?

2. What do you notice about the end of the seventh day? (Compare 1:5, 8, 13 etc)

3. When will we fully enjoy this rest with God? (Hebrews 4:11, Revelation 4:13)

4. The Israelites were commanded to set aside the seventh day each week to rest from all work, and rejoice in their relationship with God and one another (Exodus 20:8-11). The New Testament does not require us to keep this law in the same strict way (Colossians 2:16, Romans 14:5, Galatians 4:10). Yet Genesis 2:1-3 and the Sabbath command continue to teach us important things about life in God's world. What might we need to learn, and what problems might be caused if we don't learn them?
 - a. For yourself

 - b. For your family

 - c. For others you influence e.g. employees.

For further reflection, if you have time: how is the Bible's picture of rest similar and different to the Aussie ideal of the long weekend? In what ways is the Bible's picture richer? Which is your heart drawn to, and what might that tell you about your heart?

PRAY: Thank God that he made us to enjoy his rest with him, which we will enjoy forever in heaven (Hebrews 4:11). Pray that you will give a proper place to rest and relationships, especially with God, and ask for wisdom in applying this in your life, family, business, and ministries.

IN THE BEGINNING, GOD

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

As you READ GEN 1:1-2:3 what are the repeated words, ideas or phrases?

GEN 1:26-28 - what purpose to our lives is suggested by these verses? (you will need to consider that God made Man in His image & in chapter 2 gave them His Spirit)

What are the implications of the bible's view of God for the way we live?

WEEK 1&2: PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

RELATIONSHIPS

Hang on. Didn't we already watch this scene? The creation story is told again, from a 'different camera angle'. If Genesis 1 was the drone shot flying high above, we now get the close up, a more more intimate focal length that highlights a complementary set of truths. For example, we see 'the pattern' of how God intends this new web of relationships (involving him, the natural world, and humanity) to be shaped.

Week 2: Day 1: Caring Creator

READ Genesis 2:4-9

1. Compare this chapter to the previous chapter. What is different? Among other things, consider the tone, the way God creates and in what order, and God's name.

2. A different angle allows a different focus. What do you think this passage is trying to emphasise about:
 - a. God

 - b. God's relationship with us

 - c. The world

3. How does this encourage you? How might it increase your thankfulness to God?

PRAY: Write two or three sentences that start with the words "I praise you God for..." and pray them as a prayer of praise to God.

RELATIONSHIPS

Day 3: Men and Women

READ Genesis 2:18-25

Over the next three days we will consider what we can learn about men, women, marriage, and sex from the first man and woman.

1. How do these verses (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:21, 2:23, 2:24) powerfully communicate the equality and similarities between men and women?

2. How do these verses (1:27, 2:18*, 2:23) reveal differences between men and women?

3. From the tone of 2:18-25, how would you describe the vibe of the relationship God had in mind for men and women?

*Note: the word translated 'suitable' has the sense of 'opposite and matching').

Continued next page...

WEEK 2: GENESIS 2:4-25

Day 3 continued..

4. Can you think of times when you've seen these Biblical truths beautifully expressed?

a. Because we live in a fallen world, there are many in our society and also in our church who have experienced hurt, confusion, or conflict in relation to these things. How have you seen the effects of sin in these areas?

b. Consider Jesus' example of compassion, grace, love, and truth. How might Jesus' example shape the way we navigate these truths for ourselves and those around us?

PRAY: Thank you God that you did not design men and women to compete or trample on each other, but rather to enjoy our equality and our complementary differences together in unity and love. Please help me to express this in my relationships today.

RELATIONSHIPS

Day 4: Marriage and Sex

REREAD Genesis 2:18-25

The first marriage! We see the goodness of marriage and sex. The Bible is not prudish or embarrassed but celebrates them as gifts of God.

1. Use these verses to compare God's plan to messages we might hear in our culture. See how many differences you can find.

	Views in our culture	God's plan
Marriage E.g. The people involved, for how long, depth of bond, good or bad thing?		
Sex E.g. People involved, proper context, purpose, good or bad thing?		

2. What do you think it means that a husband and wife "become one flesh"? Does it refer to (a) the relationship itself, (b) sex, (c) their children, (d) all of the above, or something else?

Continued next page...

WEEK 2: GENESIS 2:4-25

Day 4 continued...

3. How have you seen the views in our culture hurt people? How would things be better if everyone perfectly followed God's plan (including other commands like love, honesty, etc)?

4. Adam and his wife felt no shame, because sin had not yet entered the world. But almost every person today carries some shame from sins in this area. How does the gospel of Jesus help us deal with shame?
(1 John 1:9, 1 Peter 2:6, Hebrews 12:2, Psalm 103:8-12)

PRAY: Confess your sins to God. Thank him for the forgiveness that he won for us in Jesus' death on the cross. Ask for forgiveness, and express your thankfulness that he has promised to give it. Ask for help to follow his ways in this area of your life.

RELATIONSHIPS

Day 5: Christ and the Church

1. The following New Testament passages refer to Genesis 2. Read as many of these passages as you can with the time available, and consider the questions for each:

a. **Matthew 19:1-12.**

i. How does Jesus view the pattern taught in Genesis 2?

b. **Ephesians 5:22-33.**

i. What is the pattern in Genesis 2 really about?

ii. How does the equality and difference between men and women play out here? And what does it point to?

c. **Revelation 19:6-8, 21:1-3**

i. What is the eternal future of marriage? (Compare Matthew 22:39)

2. Summarise your findings. How does the New Testament confirm and expand Genesis' view of marriage? How does it point to Jesus?

PRAY: Thank God for the symbol of his unending love for his people, and for the picture of the union between Christ and his church. Pray for the husbands and wives in our church as they seek to glorify Jesus by living out this pattern in their lives. Pray also for those in our church who are not married (whether unmarried, separated, widowed, etc) to be faithful to Christ and the family of faith as we wait together to enjoy the eternal reality of which earthly marriage is just a shadow.

WEEK 2: GENESIS 2:4-25

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

As you READ GENESIS 2:18-25 in what ways is His active goodness for us apparent?

In GEN 2:4-27, the man is passive and God alone is active. What might the author be suggesting by emphasising this relationship?

Consider the truth that we're made for God. How should that direct our thinking, praying and sense of purpose?

THE FALL

3. Examine the tactics that the serpent uses in Genesis 3. What are his strategies?

a. What does he do with God's words? (Compare 3:1-4 to 1:26)

b. What does he suggest about God's character?

c. What does he tug on in human hearts?

4. How does this help us fight sin in our own life? For example, what might be good tactics to oppose Satan's strategies?

PRAY: Ask for God's help to recognise Satan's deceptions in your own life. Ask for help to avoid twisting God's word, doubting God's goodness, or pursuing your own desires.

WEEK 3: GENESIS 3

Day 2: The Effects of Sin (1)

READ Genesis 3:7-12

1. What can you see are the first effects of sin on humanity? (Compare with 2:25)
 - a. In ourselves?

 - b. In our relationships with each other?

 - c. In our relationship with God?

2. Why do you think sin has these effects?

3. One way to fight sin is to see how destructive it is, and so grow to hate it. Write down one example of the destructive effects of sin recently in your (a) Christian life, (b) relationships with others, and (c) relationship with God.

4. Read Genesis 3:21. How is God's act of kindness here similar to Jesus' forgiving work?

PRAY: Express sorrow to God for the sin in our world and in your life. Ask him to help you see its destructive effects and grow to hate it more, so that you will more easily resist temptation. Thank God for the work of Jesus who clothes us with righteousness through his death on the cross, so that we do not need to hide from God any more.

THE FALL

Day 3: The Effects of Sin (2)

READ Genesis 3:13-15

God spells out the consequences of sin in three sets of curses, relating particularly to (1) the serpent, (2) women, (3) men.

1. What does God say about the consequences of sin relating to the serpent?

2. This passage is called the 'proto-euangelion', a fancy sounding phrase that just means "first gospel". Can you see the gospel in verse 15?

a. Hints: Who is crushing who? Who is striking who?

3. A few children's Bibles helpfully show how the rest of the Bible is the story of this promise coming true. (For example, The Big Picture Story Bible by David Helm, The Biggest Story by Kevin DeYoung, and the Kingdom of God Bible Storybook by Tyler Van Halteren). But "adult's Bibles" do it too: How does the promise of Genesis 3:15 come true in these verses: Matthew 1:23, Hebrews 2:14, 1 John 3:8?

4. What does it tell you about God, that he would make this hope-filled promise at this low moment of history?

For further reflection, if you have time: Eve means "life". Why is it striking that verse 20 comes after verse 19? What might Adam have in mind?

PRAY: Thank God for his grace, love and commitment to his world, especially to the people he made in his image despite our sin. Ask that hope would fill your heart and life, and that we would be able to proclaim this hope to God's world.

WEEK 3: GENESIS 3

Day 4: The Effects of Sin (4)

READ Genesis 3:16-20

1. In what ways will the consequences of sin be particularly felt by (a) women and (b) men?
2. Consider the 'spheres of activity' mentioned for men and for women. Why do you think these are highlighted?
3. What are the effects of sin on (a) relationships and (b) work?
4. How might awareness of these effects shape the decisions you make in day-to-day life?

PRAY: Thank God that he has not abandoned us to our sin, but has given us his Word and Spirit to grow us. Express to God in lament the grief or frustration you feel about the effects of life in a fallen world, especially in relationships and work. Ask that you will not seek your hope or significance in work or relationships, but rather in Christ.

THE FALL

Day 5: East of Eden

READ Genesis 3:20-24

Why is life such a mixed experience? So much is so good, but so much is frustrating and bitter.

1. In Genesis 1-2 we saw God create his people to enjoy his blessings under his rule in his good garden. How do these verses show the disintegration of each of these good things?

2. What can these verses and this chapter tell us about God?
 - a. His rule
 - b. His response to sin
 - c. His kindness
 - d. His heart for humanity

3. Life in our fallen world can be described as living 'east of Eden' - marked by pain, sin, and death. How do people today try to recreate Eden? Can it be done? What is the way back to the garden? (Revelation 21:1-7)

4. How do these things affect life for you now, especially the way you relate to God?

PRAY: Thank God for his immeasurable goodness, both in refusing to tolerate sin and also in his grace toward sinners.

WEEK 3: GENESIS 3

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

In GEN 3:8-13, what typical results of human sin do you see?

Why do you think our response to sin is to hide from God?

What do you think we can learn from this episode about living in a fallen world?

PRAY: T

WEEK 3&4: PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

PRAY: S

WEEK 4: GENESIS 4-11

The serpent said, “You will not surely die.” Now we get to see whether God or the serpent spoke the truth. What consequences follow when humans abandon God’s law and each of us becomes a little ‘god’ making our own laws?

Week 4: Day 1: The Spread of Sin and Death

READ Genesis 4:1-16 (or, if you have time, read chapters 4-5)

1. How do you see sin escalating in these verses? Why do you think this is happening?
2. How do 4:6-7 help us understand temptation and responsibility? And what do we learn about murder and justice from 4:10?
3. What examples of God’s continued kindness appear in chapter 4?
4. And yet - what effect is left by the final word of each paragraph in chapter 5? (e.g. 5:5, 8, 11, 14) What is needed?

PRAY: The author has illustrated the seemingly invincible spread of evil. As a Christian, what reaction does this prompt in you? Use this reaction as a basis for your prayer.

OUTSIDE THE GARDEN

Day 2: Only evil all the time

READ Genesis 6:5-22 (or, if you have time, read chapters 6-7)

1. We do not see people's hearts, but God does. What is his verdict? (6:5)
2. Faced with the great evils in our world, many ask "why doesn't God stop it?" But few imagine what that might involve. What does God decide to do about the evil in the world? (6:11-13)
3. There can be a danger of treating this passage as a children's story and missing the horror. What would it have been like to be outside the ark? (7:20-24)
4. It is hard to make sense of God's acts of judgement without a clear understanding of God's majesty, holiness, and justice, and of how terrible sin really is. How does this devastating event help you to see these realities more clearly?
5. What lessons must we learn from this about God's future judgement? (If you have time, consider the lessons drawn in Matthew 24:36-49 or 2 Peter 3:6-7.)

For further reflection: The Hebrew word translated 'regret' in Genesis 6:6-7 can mean 'grieve, relent, change one's mind'. As we think about this, what must we keep in mind about God (e.g. see Numbers 23:19, 1 Samuel 15:29, which use the same Hebrew word)? Often the Bible will use human-ish language to help us understand God, like his 'powerful outstretched arm' (Deuteronomy 9:29) even though we are not to think of him as having actual arms. What do you think Genesis 6:6-7 is trying to communicate about God, if we know he does not actually have human regrets?

PRAY: Thank you God that you take sin seriously and grieve evil. Please help us to take deep into our hearts the awfulness of sin, the majesty of your holiness, and the certainty of a future day of judgement. Please help us to live in light of that – trusting Christ and making him known.

WEEK 4: GENESIS 4-11

Day 3: A fresh start?

READ Genesis 8:1-3 and 9:1-11 (or, if you have time, read 8:1 - 9:17)

The flood could have been the end of the story for our world. But then how would the 'first gospel' promise of Genesis 3:15 be fulfilled? Today, we see the salvation and 'recreation' of the world through the judgement of the flood.

1. As the flood levels drop and the occupants of the ark emerge, compare the way it is described to the creation of the world in Genesis 1. What point do you think it is making about the world after the flood and God's relation to it?

- a. 8:2 and 1:2 (note 'wind' and 'spirit' are the same word in Hebrew)
- b. 8:17 and 1:22
- c. 9:1, 7 and 1:28
- d. 9:3 and 1:29
- e. 9:6 and 1:27

2. In Genesis 9:8-17, we find the first description of God entering into a covenant with humanity. What can you learn from these verses about what a covenant is? What is promised in this particular covenant?

3. Why do you think God is making these promises rather than simply shutting down the world? What does it say about God and about why humanity has a future?

For further reflection, if you have time: What are the implications of Genesis 9:3-6 for moral choices (e.g. vegetarianism, the value of human life)?

PRAY: Thank God for his grace and patience and love, shown in his decision to freely promise far more than we deserve.

OUTSIDE THE GARDEN

Day 4: Look what else came out of the ark

READ Genesis 9:18-29 (or, if you have time, read 9:18-10:32)

Ever since the promise of Genesis 3:15, the reader has been looking out for the promised offspring of Eve who will crush Satan.

1. Noah's name means "rest" (see Genesis 5:28-29). Perhaps his parents trusted that promise and hoped their son might be the promised serpent crusher. But what problem continues to exist in the world after the flood and why? (9:20-21)
2. From the way the Noah episode ends, what lessons can we learn about the sort of saviour we need? What must he be like? What problems will he need to deal with?
3. How does the account of the flood, Noah, and the ark point to Jesus? Consider what is similar, and what is different.
4. How important is it to be in the true 'ark'? Are you? How can you use your life to help others to get into the boat?

For further reflection, if you have time: Was Noah a righteous person? What does that mean? Consider Genesis 6:8, 9, 22; 9:20; Hebrews 11:7. Note that the word 'favour' can also be translated 'grace'. What role does faith play?

PRAY: Thank God for sending his own son, Jesus, born from a woman to fulfil his promises. Thank God that Jesus did not have his own sin problem, and therefore was able to always obey, and to pay for our sins. Thank God for the future New Creation, which will be free from all the effects of the fall, in which we will never again sin. Pray for your friends, family, and neighbours to come to Jesus for this salvation.

WEEK 4: GENESIS 4-11

Day 5: The height of pride

READ Genesis 11:1-10 (or, if you have time, read chapters 10-11)

We've seen the devastating spread of sin and death. Next week we'll see how God will work to reverse the effects of the fall. But first we see humanity's attempt.

1. What do the tower builders hope to achieve with the new technology they've developed? (What destination? What goal? To avoid what fear?)
2. There is satire in the way God's response is described (verse 5). When God bends down to see this puny tower, what does he do? And what happens to the people's hopes?
3. Compare humanity in this chapter to humanity before Adam and Eve sinned. How has sin and its consequences affected relationships with each other, and with God? What might this tell us about what it looks like when God overturns the effects of sin?
4. The temptation in the first sin came from the desire to "be like God" (3:5). What is similar in the tower of Babel episode? What lessons are there for us about where this desire leads?

For further reflection, if you have time: What lessons do you think the author is trying to teach us through the genealogy of Genesis 10? (See Acts 17:26-27, Romans 5:12-15.)

One line of thought to consider, among many others: Abraham and Jesus are descended from Shem. Who are the Gentiles (ie non Jews) descended from (10:5, 20)? When do the descendants of Japheth end up 'in the tents of Shem'(Genesis 9:26-27, Ephesians 3:6)?

PRAY: Say sorry for the times you have sought to make a name for yourself, or to be like God in deciding what is right and wrong, or to be like God in rescuing yourself from your sin. Ask for the humility to trust him as Lord and Saviour. And ask him to work in your life for the glory of his name, not yours.

OUTSIDE THE GARDEN

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

As you READ Gen 4:1-17, what does the author tell you about Cain and his brother?

As He did with Adam, God takes the initiative to confront Cain after his offering is rejected and again after he murders his brother. How is Cain's response even worse than his father Adam's?

As we marry and grow families how can we help to protect them and equip them to fight against sin?

THE TURNING POINT (THE PROMISE)

Here is the turning point of the whole Bible! The pace suddenly slows from the whirlwind of chapters 1-11, which spanned the cosmos and the ages. The next 39 chapters follow just four generations of one family, beginning with a nobody called Abram (later called Abraham). He is one of the great, great, (great... etc) grandchildren of Noah's son Shem. And to this nobody, God makes world-altering promises.

Week 5: Day 1: The Promise

READ Genesis 11:27-12:1-9

The places mentioned in these verses are probably on some of the first few maps in the back of your Bible.

1. What eight things did God promise to do for Abram if he went?
2. How did Abram respond to God's command and promise?
3. Which details in the passage help you to understand how significant this moment would have been for Abram, and then for the entire world?
4. Why should these promises to a Jewish man thousands of years ago have anything to do with you? See Galatians 3:7-8, 14, 16.

For further reflection, if you have time: Contrast God's promise with the direction things have been heading because of sin. What do you notice?

- a. Genesis 3:14, 17
- b. Genesis 3:23
- c. Genesis 10:32

PRAY: Praise God for his plan to bless "all the people on earth". Ask that he'd continue to treat our world generously.

WEEK 5: GENESIS 12-17

Day 2: Failure

READ Genesis 12:9-20 (or, if you have time, read 12:5-14:24)

1. What circumstances test Abram's faith? How and why does he fail?
2. And yet what evidence is there of his faith in God's promise?
3. Why did God curse Pharaoh but bless Abram?
4. What evidence is there in these chapters that God's promise to Abram is conditional or unconditional?
A conditional promise = I will do this as long as you...
An unconditional promise = I will do this, even you don't...

For further reflection, if you have time: Read 12:11 and 12:14 again. Work out how old Sarai was when this happened (age difference: 17:17, then see 12:4). What might this teach us about beauty? (See 1 Peter 3:3-6.)

If you would like to reflect more on chapters 13 and 14, here are some additional suggestions:

- a. Why did Lot choose the land he did (13:10), and what was the danger of his choice (13:12-13)?
- b. Does anything in chapter 14:1-16 show growth in Abram's faith? What in chapters 12-13 might have helped? Also, why does he decline the king's offer in 14:22?

PRAY: Pray that you will trust our trustworthy God, especially in hardship, by remembering and relying on his promises.

THE TURNING POINT (THE PROMISE)

Day 3: How to be right with God

READ Genesis 15

1. God has repeated his promise to Abraham three times (12:1-3, 7, 13:14-17). But in this vision, Abram seems to express doubt. What human factors seem to threaten God's promise (11:30, 15:2-3)?

2. What happens in these verses that leads to Abram believing God's promise?

3. What gift does God give Abram as a result of his faith in verse 6?

4. What does this teach us about...
 - a. the way to be right with God (e.g. see Romans 4:1-8)?

 - b. the nature of saving faith (e.g. is Abram's faith perfect? 15:8)?

 - c. the connection between faith and God's word?

PRAY: Give thanks that we can be made righteous before God simply by trusting him! Thank God for giving us his precious word to create, sustain, and grow our faith. Pray that you may be one who trusts the words of God in the way Abram did.

THE TURNING POINT (THE PROMISE)

Day 5: Covenant people

READ Genesis 17

1. Abram was 75 when we first met him (12:4-5). How old is Abram (renamed Abraham in verse 5) now and how long has it been since chapter 16 (see 16:16, 7:1)?

2. We saw yesterday that God has already made a covenant with Abraham. Why another? And what is promised? (verses 3-8)

3. What is the sign of this covenant (verses 9-14)? What about us, in the New Covenant - do we need to be circumcised to be considered 'righteous' (see Romans 4:9-12)?

4. God especially blesses his covenant people. But does that mean he is harsh or uncaring towards those outside the covenant? (See verses 18-21)

PRAY: Give thanks to God that many thousands of years later his word is still true and he remains faithful to his everlasting covenant. Praise God we are able to be part of this inheritance through Jesus!

WEEK 5: GENESIS 12-17

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

As you READ GENESIS 11:27-12:9 what can you find out about Abram, his family and the promise he receives from God?

As you READ GENESIS 12:10-20, how does this episode show the covenant promise at work?

If we ever made a covenant with God, we'd break it in an instant. How does Jesus fulfil the covenant for us? Is there any way we can break the covenant?

WEEK 5&6: PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

WEEK 6: GENESIS 18-24

What does it look like to live as a person trusting God's saving promises?

Week 6: Day 1: Saving Grace

READ Genesis 18:16-33 (or, if you have time, read chapters 18-19)

Lots to think about! You may not have time to consider every question, and that's ok.

1. What stands out to you about Abraham's prayers and God's response (18:22-33)?

2. What did these people deserve?

3. Lot chose to live near Sodom because it looked prosperous, despite its reputation for wickedness and rebellion against God (13:10-13). But what did it eventually cost him (19:16-19)?

4. Luke 17:26-18:8 has a few connections with this passage.
 - a. What are the similarities and differences between the judgement that came on Sodom and the judgement that will come "on the day the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:28-37)?

 - b. Jesus also encouraged an approach to prayer similar to Abraham's from Genesis (Luke 18:1-8). Are there acts of divine mercy or justice you could ask God for more persistently? What's a good time in your day to regularly pray for that?

PRAY: Thank God that he hears and answers prayer. Pray that you will be alert and ready for the return of Jesus. Ask God to keep you from being led astray by the things of this world. Pray, like Abraham, for those you know who don't yet know Jesus as their Saviour.

FAITH IN THE PROMISE

Day 2: Restraining Grace

READ Genesis 20

1. What events in this chapter have something to teach us about (a) God's protecting care and (b) saving grace?

2. Abraham should have known better than to try this same deception again! Why do genuine believers still sin?

3. This is the second time God has intervened to prevent sin in these circumstances, first through sickness (12:17) and now through a dream. This suggests that God graciously prevents every human from being as bad as we would like to be in our sinfulness. God does this in many ways, some obvious and some hidden. Think about your day yesterday. What might it have been like without this restraining grace at work (in you and in everyone else)?

PRAY: Thank God for his restraining grace that he extends to all people, as well as for his saving grace that he has poured out to all who trust in Jesus. Thank God that our salvation depends not on perfect faith, but rather on a perfect saviour.

WEEK 6: GENESIS 18-24

Day 3: Electing Grace

READ Genesis 21:1-21 (or, if you have time, read the whole chapter)

1. Most Bibles will have a footnote to explain what the word 'Isaac' means. Why might Abraham have given his son this name? (Also have a look back at 18:12-14.)

2. What was Isaac going to inherit, that Sarah might have been thinking about?

3. What inheritance does God kindly provide for Ishmael, and why?

4. Read Romans 9:6-9, 15-16; Galatians 4:28-31. What lessons about God and our salvation are we to learn from this chapter of Genesis?

PRAY: Praise God that nothing is too hard for him. Thank God that our salvation does not depend on our ability or decisions, because we would never choose him. Thank him that he saves by grace, through his promises, according to his own sovereign plan and purposes.

WEEK 6: GENESIS 18-24

Day 5: Providential Grace

READ Genesis 24:1-21, 57-67 (or, if you have time, read chapters 23-24)

1. What characteristics was the servant looking out for?

2. And what is commendable about Rebekah? How might this shape the sort of person you aspire to be, or to be with?

3. The romantic ending of chapter 24 endorses the goodness of God's gifts of attraction and romantic love. But don't forget the context! How do these events fit into the bigger story of the progress of God's big promises to Abraham?

You could consider:

- Why Isaac's marriage status matters
- The role of God's hidden hand of providence
- The way God's promises are shaping Abraham's circumstances, his view of himself and his family, and his decision making (e.g. 24:3-4 24:8; 23:2-4)

PRAY: Ask that you will value those things in people which truly matter, and that God would grow godly characteristics in your life. Praise God for his providence (which means the way he sovereignly directs all that happens according to his infinite wisdom and loving kindness, to fulfil his good promises and plans for our world).

FAITH IN THE PROMISE

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

As you READ GEN 22:1-12, what things does Abraham do or say which suggest that he believes that God can still fulfil His covenant even if Isaac is sacrificed?

In GEN 22:12 God's response to Abraham's action is "Now I know". But surely God already knew! What then was the point of the test? (James 2:22,23)

How should we respond if we thought God was asking something extreme of us?

JACOB I LOVED

Jacob, later renamed “Israel”, becomes the father of the twelve tribes of Israel. Esau becomes the father of another nation called Edom. Both are children of Abraham, so why does Jacob inherit the promise rather than Esau?

Week 7: Day 1: Inheriting the promise

READ Genesis 25:19-34 (or, if you have time, read the whole chapter)

Abraham’s son, Isaac, now has kids of his own.

1. What does God say about the destiny of each child and their descendants, before they are even born (verses 21-26)?
 - a. What is this based on? (See Romans 9:11-12.)

2. Refer to verses 27-34. What human decisions are made? What is the connection between their decisions and God’s decision?
 - a. What lessons ought we learn? (See Hebrews 12:14-17.)

PRAY: Praise God that his gracious purposes do not depend on our good deeds, but rather on his powerful, merciful, sovereign decrees. And, because this does not take away our responsibility, pray along the lines of the Hebrews passage for God’s sovereign help to avoid Esau’s mistakes in the decisions you will make today and in the future.

WEEK 7: GENESIS 25-30

Day 2: Inheriting weakness

READ Genesis 26

God's promise to Abraham has not died with Abraham's death, but is reaffirmed to his offspring Isaac.

1. How similar are God's promises to Isaac in comparison with His promises to Abraham? (See 12:2-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-5, 13-16, 18-21; 17:1-8, 16, 19-21; 18:10, 14, 17-19; 22:16-18.)

2. What similarities do you notice between Isaac and his father?

3. What has Abimelek learned from just one experience of God's mercy? (Remember 20:3-7.)

4. How does this encourage and challenge you as you remember God's promises to you? (e.g. John 3:16, Ephesians 2:6-7)

PRAY: Give thanks for God's overwhelming generosity to us as people who don't deserve it.

WEEK 7: GENESIS 25-30

Day 4: People of the Lord

READ Genesis 28, starting with 27:46

1. Why have Abraham and Isaac, as worshippers of the LORD, cared so much about their sons marrying a descendent of Shem rather than Canaan? (See Genesis 9:26, Exodus 34:14-16.)
2. What did Jacob's dream mean?
3. What words would you use to describe Jacob's faith in response to God's promise (verses 20-22)?
4. What can we learn from this chapter about God, his plans, faith, and how we should live?

PRAY: Give thanks for God's ongoing plan despite the people he has to work with (including us!).

JACOB I LOVED

Day 5: Dodgy dealings

READ Genesis 29:31-30:24 (or, If you have time, read Genesis 29-30)

Jacob the deceiver gets a turn of being on the receiving end of some dodgy deception when he tries to get married (29:16-25). Jacob's response is dodgy too. Blind with love, he goes over the maximum number of allowed wives (29:26-30).

1. What decisions are the different players making, and what are their driving motivations?
2. Just because the Bible 'describes' something does not mean it 'prescribes' it. How does this account (and what we've seen in Genesis so far) subtly communicate to us that these are not actions to copy?
3. Why was Leah not loved (29:17, 31), and yet what role does God give her in his saving plan? (See Hebrews 7:14, Genesis 29:35.)
4. What sort of people and decisions can God use to bring about his purposes?

PRAY: Pray that God may use you for his glory this week.

WEEK 7: GENESIS 25-30

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

As you READ GENESIS 27:1-40, what can you find out about the members of this family?

What human failures may have given rise to this terrible family dynamic?

Is there a place for our own effort in trying to obtain the blessing of God? How can we know when we're relying on our own resources instead of relying on God?

WEEK 7&8: PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

WEEK 8: GENESIS 31-38

This family becomes the 12 tribes of Israel. But it's a bit of a messy family! Lots of dodgy decisions, which raises the question of how to apply these chapters. They can't always be examples to follow, so what are we supposed to learn instead? And then, we see that God works through it all to keep his promises. Lots of these dodgy decisions even show up in Jesus' family tree (see Matthew 1)!

Week 8: Day 1: How to get out of living with your in-laws

READ Genesis 31:1-21 (or, if you have time, read Genesis 30:25 – 31:55)

1. It's been 20 years since the two deceivers, Jacob and Laban, first met (31:41). Do you notice any ways Jacob has changed? What about Laban?
2. Is there anything different in the way Jacob thinks about God (e.g. 31:3-13, 38-42)? What about Laban (31:19, 29-30)?
3. List the different reasons that Jacob finally returns to Canaan (31:1-5), Rachel and Leah go with him (14-16), and Laban eventually lets them (26-30)?
4. What underlying principles can we learn? Try to write down 3 or 4, each in a simple short sentence. (E.g principles about life, especially the most important dimension of life - pleasing God, or other topics such family, character.)

PRAY: Pray for a heart to grow and become more mature in your walk with God.

MESSY FAMILIES

Day 2: 'Close' brothers

READ Genesis 32 (or, if you have time time, read chapters 32 and 33)

1. What can we learn from Jacob's prayer, and what might it look like to build it into your prayer life?
2. Recall what you can about Jacob as a scheming, hustling younger man. What in his preparations might show growth (e.g. in wisdom, humility, faith, other things)? Or, what might indicate his old, natural weaknesses and tendencies resurfacing?
3. How does a new name help reinforce a new identity? What's different from his old name? (See verse 22-32. For clues, also see the footnote for verse 28 and 25:26; and 35:10).
4. What new names or titles are given to you, as a Christian, in the New Testament? How might remembering those help you to put on the new self and put off your old ways?

List the ones you can think of. If time, or as a project for another day, you could look up some of these: Romans 1:6-7, 1 Peter 2:5 and 9-10, Acts 9:1-2, John 1:12, Ephesians 2:19-20, 1 Peter 4:16, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Luke 8:21, Romans 8:17, Revelation 1:6.

PRAY: Are there things you need to trust God with at the moment, or things you are struggling to trust him with? Pray for those things, and pray that you will trust God with them.

WEEK 8: GENESIS 31-38

Day 3: Dishonourable Conduct

READ Genesis 34

1. This wretched episode begins with a terrible sin (verse 2). From verse 3 onwards, what is helpful or harmful about the responses (or lack of response) of:

- a. Shechem and his father
- b. Jacob's sons
- c. Jacob (verses 5, 6-7, and 30)

2. What do you think Jacob, and his sons, ought to have done differently?

3. God's people are called "Israel" because they are descendants of Jacob, aka Israel (32:28). Why do you think the Scriptures of this nation include this sort of story about the fathers of the tribes of Israel?

4. How do we decide which parts of Genesis to apply to ourselves as examples to follow? What other messages might it be communicating, and how do we apply those to ourselves?

PRAY: Thank God for showing our need for a perfect saviour so clearly through the mess of this very imperfect family. Thank him for responding to sin in a way that is perfect in both justice and mercy, taking our sin seriously and punishing it while also finding a way to bring mercy and restoration – through the cross of Christ.

MESSY FAMILIES

Day 4: Names

READ Genesis 35 (or, if you have time, read chapters 35-36)

1. How long do you think Jacob had known about the idols in his household, and what prompts him to lead his household to get rid of them?
2. What has changed in the way Jacob talks about God, and what can we learn about God from the names that God is called? (See 31:42, 33:20, 35:3, 11. Many Bibles give the meaning of a Hebrew name as a footnote on the verse.)
3. After all his mistakes, what promises does God still make to Israel aka Jacob? Why? (See Genesis 12:1-3.)
4. What encouraging things do these reflections remind or teach you about God's nature, character, and faithfulness?

For further reflection, if you have time: A pattern is emerging in Genesis. Whenever the story progresses to a new generation, the writer follows the line of one child in particular. But just before we 'zoom in' on that line, other family lines are quickly summarised (Genesis 4, 10 25:12-18). Chapter 36 continues the pattern. What do we learn about God's election from this?

The nation Edom comes from sinful Esau (36:40-41), but God's people Israel come from sinful Jacob. What were the divine and human factors that led to the story of God's promises continuing with Jacob rather than Esau? (See Micah 1:2-5 and Jeremiah 18:7-8.)

PRAY: Praise God, the One and Only, for his faithfulness throughout the ages, the Great Promise Keeper.

WEEK 8: GENESIS 31-38

Day 5: The Ioin of Judah

READ Genesis 38

We will come back to Genesis 37 next week as we look in depth at Joseph's fall and rise. But we finish this week's theme of God's work through messy families with perhaps the messiest example of all.

1. Identify the sin(s) of each person and what might have motivated them. How does each sin contribute to the next? (Among Judah's other sins, don't miss verse 2, see Genesis 24:3.)
2. What can we learn about the effects of our decisions to disobey God?
3. See Matthew 1:1-3. What fruit does God bring out of this sickening series of events? Why do you think it was important to God to do it this way?
4. What hope does this give you?

PRAY: Thank God for his gracious sovereignty over all things, and his willingness to enter this world so broken by sin to bring the salvation that we sinners so desperately need. Ask him to help you trust and obey him in the

MESSY FAMILIES

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

Knowing the history of Israel, as you READ GENESIS 15:12-21, what do you learn about God's future plans for Abraham's family?

What do you think was God's purpose in the captivity of Israel in Egypt?

Some people think that our sins can divert us out of God's plan A and into His plan B for ever. Does God have a plan B? Is there any truth in that claim?

IN THE PIT

The sons of Jacob are children of the promise, baby! So everything should go pretty easy for them right? But Joseph's slide into the literal pit tells us that it's not that simple. God's plans sometimes don't go the way you'd think. An innocent man is betrayed by his closest companions, suffers unjustly, and ends up underground. How does this square with God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham's offspring?

Week 9: Day 1: The favourite

READ Genesis 37

1. What factors contributed to Joseph's brothers' jealous hatred?
2. What other sins and consequences followed? What can we learn from this? (See James 3:16, 4:2, 10.)
3. In how many ways did Jacob's favouritism reveal itself? What effects might this have in your family, workplace, ministry team, growth group, church community or any other area over which you have an influence? (See James 2:1-4. But what is the difference between favouritism and, for example, appropriate friendships?)
4. What is similar between Joseph's descent and Jesus' journey to the cross?

PRAY: Pray for forgiveness for the envy in your life and ask for God's strength to rid your life of it.

WEEK 9: GENESIS 37-42

Day 2: The faultless

READ Genesis 39

1. How many different times in this chapter does Joseph succeed, and what factors (divine, and human) contributed to each?
2. Name the various temptations that Joseph overcame. What patterns in his family history make his self-control even more impressive?
3. What can you learn about what it looks like to flee sin and live with integrity?
4. When the Lord is with us and we make good decisions, what life decisions might we expect to come our way (see especially verses 17-20a)? Who does this remind you of?

PRAY: Pray for God to be with you in everything, especially to help you live with wisdom and holiness, so that you may be a godly person like Joseph. Ask for patience and an eternal perspective when it seems that godly decisions are not rewarded in this life.

IN THE PIT

Day 3: The faithful

READ Genesis 40-41:14

1. You and I might have become bitter in these conditions, but what do you notice in Joseph?

2. How does God use Joseph's determination to continue trying to help others?

3. How is God's power and sovereign rule over all things highlighted in the various events and circumstances that combine in these verses?

4. God raises Joseph. What does this foreshadow? (See Psalm 16:10, Acts 13:34-35.)

PRAY: Pray that your life may be Christlike and a godly witness to others even in difficult times. Ask for opportunities to help others today, especially to help them understand and trust in Jesus.

WEEK 9: GENESIS 37-42

Day 4: The fruitful

READ Genesis 41:14-57

1. What did Pharaoh see in Joseph, that he would entrust so much to his care?

2. What did Joseph do on the basis of God's revelation of the future, and how widespread was the impact? (Consider the last verse of the chapter.)

3. What blessings are beginning to flow to others through this offspring of Abraham? Why? (See also 39:3-5, Genesis 12:1-3.)

4. God has revealed to you the truth of Jesus the Saviour and Lord, as well as the coming future eternal realities of heaven and hell. How could you use that knowledge to bring blessing to the people of our world?

PRAY: Give thanks to God for those who have shared Jesus with you. Ask him for eyes to see opportunities to strengthen and encourage others, and have wisdom and love to do so in light of God's love in Christ.

IN THE PIT

Day 5: The forgiving

READ Genesis 42:1-26 (or, if you have time, read chapters 42-43)

1. What mixture of emotions might Joseph be feeling towards his brothers?

2. What is the effect on them of Joseph's strange treatment? What could Joseph's goals be in this approach? (See 42:17-24, 43:8-9.)

3. Do you see any parallels to the way God treats those he loves? (See, for example, Hebrews 12:6, 11; Jeremiah 31:18-19.)

PRAY: Thank God for his kind and wise discipline. Ask God to help you recognise your guilt where appropriate, repent sincerely, and trust his forgiveness.

WEEK 9: GENESIS 37-42

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

As you READ GENESIS 39:1-23, what statements remind you of the covenant promise to bless Abraham's descendants and also those who bless those descendants?

Knowing what you know of God's plans for this family, how is God's sovereign power displayed?

When you go through times of hardship and God doesn't seem to answer, what do you need from others to help you persevere? What could you do now to be a help to others?

WEEK 9&10: PRAYER POINTS & NOTES

WEEK 10: GENESIS 43-50

How does God's sovereignty relate to the evil in the world? Can people change? And will Joseph be the one who brings God's people into God's promised land to enjoy God's blessings forever?

Week 10: Day 1: Repentance

READ Genesis 43:26-44:34

A second trip. Benjamin is significantly younger than the other brothers. Benjamin is Joseph's only 'full brother', the only other son of Jacob's 'favourite wife' Rachel.

1. What might be motivating Joseph to give Benjamin such a different meal? (See 37:4.)
2. If it is a test, how does Judah go? (44:12, 17-18, 30-34)
3. Judah lacked integrity as a younger man (remember chapter 38 and his role in Joseph's suffering, 37:26-27). What changes do you now see in him? What characteristics of leadership, and of true repentance, have emerged?
4. What is wrong with thinking that a person is too far gone for God to change or save?

PRAY: Consider areas of your life where you have shown a tendency to sin. Confess them to God, asking him to work deep and true repentance and lasting growth in those areas. Pray also by name for friends and family members to turn to Christ in repentance and faith.

TO SAVE MANY LIVES

Day 2: Reunion

READ Genesis 45

1. What do Joseph's intense emotions reveal about what he has been longing for, despite the way his brothers sinned against him?
2. What is Joseph's attitude to his many years of suffering?
3. Does this help you to imagine the longings of our God to reconcile us to himself in Jesus, and his joy whenever a sinner returns to him (see Hebrews 12:2)? Write two sentences describing what you might imagine God's reaction to be, (a) when you first became a Christian, and (b) when you are raised to be with him in heaven?
4. List any other parallels you can identify between the story of Joseph, and the gospel of Jesus (e.g. our hope of reunion in the resurrection - verses 27-28).

Note: The technical word for what we are noticing is that Joseph is a 'type' of Jesus. The Greek word 'type' (typos) is translated 'pattern' in Hebrews 8:5. (The word is also used in Romans 5:14, 1 Corinthians 10:6, 2 Thessalonians 3:9, but typology happens in lots of places where the word isn't used as well.) An observant reader of the Old Testament will be astonished at how many places, people, events, and things are types (pictures) that were given by God in the Old Testament to prepare us to recognise and understand Jesus.

PRAY: Give heartfelt thanks for Jesus' heart for sinners and the majestic salvation that he rejoiced to achieve despite the cost. Praise God for the joy we have before us of eternity with him and his people, and ask that you will live each day for the joy of seeing more people there on that day.

WEEK 10: GENESIS 43-50

Day 3: Reassurance

READ Genesis 46:1-8, 41:26-47:12 (If time, Genesis 46-47)

1. Why might Jacob have hesitated to leave Canaan? What reassurance does God provide in 46:2-4?

2. What part of God's promise to Abraham will be fulfilled in Egypt (see verse 3, Exodus 1:7)? What signs are there in chapter 46 of it already beginning to come to pass?

3. Read 2 Corinthians 4:17-18. How have Joseph and Jacob each illustrated this truth? And in what ways can the hope of a Christian today be far greater still?

PRAY: Turn the words of 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 into your own prayer of thanksgiving to God.

WEEK 10: GENESIS 43-50

Day 5: Resurrection

READ Genesis 49:29-50:26

More chapters are devoted to Joseph than to the entire story from creation to Abraham! And from him has come blessing, for Abraham's descendants and the world. The reader should start to wonder: "Could he be the offspring of Abraham the world has been waiting for?"

1. Why is the last verse of Genesis such an anti-climax? What does this teach us about the sort of person we'll need to really fulfil God's promises in Genesis 3:15 and Genesis 12:1-7?

2. Genesis 50:20 is one to underline and memorise. What powerful insight does it give us about God's goodness amid the evil and suffering in our world?

3. How did this insight help Joseph to continue to trust God without bitterness? How could you imagine it helping you?

4. When was Genesis 50:20 most true of all (see Acts 4:27-28)?

PRAY: Genesis has presented us with many, many examples of weak humans making weak, often sinful, decisions. Yet it has also highlighted the way God's sovereign choices stand behind those real decisions, as their ultimate cause. And God's sovereign choices have been shown to be unbelievably gracious and kind: persisting with this messy family to create a people for himself, so that he would ultimately fulfil his gracious promises through a child who will crush the serpent's head and reverse the problem caused by the fall, and restore the world to God's good pattern. What a kind, compassionate, covenant-making, covenant-keeping, creator King!

Turn these things into a prayer of thanksgiving. "Thank you for..."

TO SAVE MANY LIVES

FOR GROWTH GROUP PREPARATION

As you READ GEN 50:15-26, what differences do you see between Joseph and his brothers?

What does GEN 50:20 reveal about God's sovereignty?

God's sovereignty always seeks the glory of His Son, Jesus and the good of His people. What questions should that truth cause us to ask ourselves in the midst of suffering?

SELF HEALTH GUIDE

God's grace is powerful. It brings security and optimism when we think we're doing well and even when we think we're not. And his grace will spur us on to grow. Growth can be hard. We're not sure of the way ahead.

The following is a self-health guide. It's for you to use privately. It's between you and God. If you thought it measured how your Father looks at you, it could lead to a sense of legalism. But it doesn't do that. Rate yourself 1 to 5 for each point, with 5 being high. Pick one or two to ask God's help in.

Mission

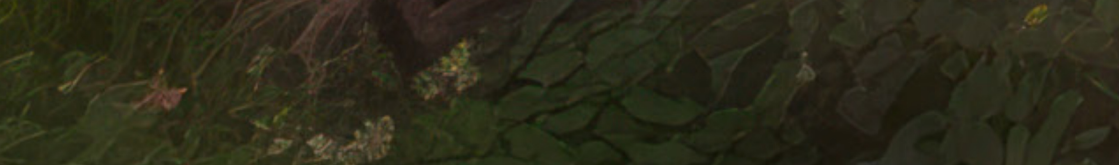
- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I am praying regularly for non-Christians friends to be saved | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I take opportunities to speak to my non-Christian friends about the gospel | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I feel confident that I could explain the gospel to someone who doesn't know it | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I prayerfully and financially support mission partners | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I make use of Grace Church events to help my friends by inviting them. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Maturity

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I engage regularly with the Bible during the week outside church activities | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I intentionally make time for prayer throughout my week | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am a regular participant with others in a group for Christian fellowship | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| My Christian life and beliefs are evident to my friends | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I regularly confess my sins to God and seek to overcome them | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Membership

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I value & prioritise church attendance | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I take the initiative before & after church to welcome new people | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I am alert to opportunities at church and during the week to care for needy members of church | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |



I initiate fruitful conversations with brothers and sisters to build them up

I seek to show hospitality in a way that is consistent with my situation

Magnification

1 2 3 4 5

I have a mindset that my daily life is about God's glory

In my relationship with God I regularly experience-gratitude, joy, repentance, forgiveness, satisfaction etc

I feel equipped with practices & habits that help me relate with God during the day

I know my example on a Sunday affects others so I seeking to encourage them in the way I listen, sing, talk etc

I seek to worship God through the way I interact with others

Ministry

1 2 3 4 5

I see all of my life as service and take opportunities outside church to serve others

I serve regularly in a church ministry team and prioritise this in my planning

I feel like I'm using my skills, gifts and time wisely for God's kingdom

The gospel drives me to serve as much as I can to further the kingdom

I generally serve with humility and gladness

How are you feeling? Good because you think you nailed it? Depressed because you think you're failing? Consider this: *"...by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect..."*

1 Corinthians 15:10

Pick one or two things you want to grow in and ask God to help you:

