

*“I am not worthy of the least  
of all the deeds of steadfast  
love and all the faithfulness  
that you have shown to your  
servant, for with only my staff  
I crossed this Jordan, and now  
I have become two camps.”*

■ GENESIS 32:10 ESV

*Reminder of*  
GOD'S BLESSING  
upon His people

**AUGUST 2015**

*“I am not worthy of the least  
of all the deeds of steadfast  
love and all the faithfulness  
that you have shown to your  
servant, for with only my staff  
I crossed this Jordan, and now  
I have become two camps.”*

**GENESIS 32:10 ESV**

**COVENANT** EFC

# 2015 Memory Focus

FROM GENESIS (ESV)

## JANUARY

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

**Genesis 1:1**

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## FEBRUARY

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God  
He created him; male and female He created them.

**Genesis 1:27**

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## MARCH

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

**Genesis 1:28**

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## APRIL

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

**Genesis 6:5**

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## MAY

“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

**Genesis 12:3**

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## JUNE

“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”

**Genesis 18:25**

## JULY

He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

**Genesis 22:2**

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## AUGUST

“I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that You have shown to Your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.”

**Genesis 32:10**

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## SEPTEMBER

And there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.

**Genesis 35:7**

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## OCTOBER

“He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

**Genesis 39:9**

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## NOVEMBER

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

**Genesis 49:10**

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## DECEMBER

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

**Genesis 50:20**

# Foreword

BY SENIOR  
PASTORS

# 2015

*marks our Jubilee Year as a nation. God is the ultimate reason for Singapore's 50 years of peace and prosperity, safety and security, shalom and success. Indeed God alone deserves all praise, honour and thanksgiving for all the blessings from above!*

Jubilee has been called a super-Sabbath. God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way. Those who are intentional about a stronger foundation, a closer walk and a deeper life. Those who are tired of their hit-and-run, hide-and-see, touch-and-go relationship with Him. This Jubilee Year, will you intentionally and zealously commit yourself to be among the first fruits of this new Jubilee generation by scheduling personal time alone with God?

Psalm 1:2-3 speaks of the blessed person as one whose "delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers".

The Psalmist finds great joy in relating to the Word of God...

He meditates upon the Word when day comes and when night falls...

Far beyond outward prosperity, the Psalmist desires the inward prosperity of his soul...

We invite you to take this year to grow deeper in faith and in His Word. Deal decisively with distractions in your life. Cut yourself off from habits and modern gadgets that displace communion with God. Fast from social media. Overhaul your schedule. Remove activities that desensitise you to the gentle promptings of the Spirit.

There is a dailyness in discipleship – soaking daily in His Word, applying His truth, reaping the fruits and passing them on.

Some years ago when Jerry Bridges was in Singapore, he talked about encountering God daily in the Word and especially the Gospel. When asked what it was like, Jerry said, "God always shows up."

What an assurance! This Jubilee Year 2015, draw near to Him. Linger in His presence. Allow Him to refresh you, renew you and restore you – a people prepared for the Day of His Visitation.

Jesus is Our Jubilee!

***Ps Tony Yeo and Ps Tan Kay Kiong***

God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way.

# Guide to Using This Devotional Journal

## 1 Prepare your heart in God's presence

- Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)
- Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

*The English Standard Version (ESV) is the default Bible version unless otherwise specified.*

## 2 Allow God to S.O.A.P. you with His Word and Spirit

- **Scripture** – *Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.*

- **Observation** – *Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You can use the guiding questions provided.*

### What's New in 2015?

A "Deeper Reflection" section has been introduced to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.

- **Application** – *Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.*
- **Prayer** – *Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.*

### What's New in 2015?

- Suggested prayers are included twice weekly to serve as an aid to those who may find them helpful in their prayer response.
- On Sundays, you may want to meditate on the Psalms, the Gospel or the Scripture passage of the sermon. This may be followed by reviewing and reflecting on the past week and then responding in prayer. Examining your life is essential in your faith journey as a redeemed disciple of Christ.

July/Aug  
2015  
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# Worship Songs

## I NEED THEE

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### Verse

I need Thee every hour  
Most gracious Lord  
No tender voice like Thine  
Can peace afford

### Chorus

I need Thee, O I need Thee  
Every hour I need Thee  
O bless me now my Saviour  
I come to Thee

### Verse

I need Thee every hour  
Stay Thou nearby  
Temptations lose their pow'r  
When Thou art nigh

### Verse

I need Thee every hour  
In joy or pain  
Come quickly and abide  
Or life is vain

### Verse

I need Thee every hour  
Most Holy One  
O make me Thine indeed  
Thou blessed Son

*Words & Music: Annie Sherwood Hawks | Robert Lowry*  
*Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain; Music: Public Domain*  
*CCLI License # 324618*

## HOLY SPIRIT

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### Verse

Holy Spirit, living Breath of God  
Breathe new life into my willing soul  
Let the presence of the risen Lord  
Come renew my heart and make me whole  
Cause Your Word to come alive in me  
Give me faith for what I cannot see  
Give me passion for Your purity  
Holy Spirit breathe new life in me

### Verse

Holy Spirit come abide within  
May Your joy be seen in all I do  
Love enough to cover ev'ry sin  
In each thought and deed and attitude  
Kindness to the greatest and the least  
Gentleness that sows the path of peace  
Turn my strivings into works of grace  
Breath of God, show Christ in all I do

### Verse

Holy Spirit from creation's birth  
Giving life to all that God has made  
Show Your power once again on earth  
Cause Your church to hunger for Your ways  
Let the fragrance of our pray'rs arise  
Lead us on the road of sacrifice  
That in unity the face of Christ  
May be clear for all the world to see

*Words & Music: Keith Getty | Stuart Townend*  
*Year & Publisher: © 2006 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)*  
*CCLI License # 324618*

## HEAL OUR LAND

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### Verse

If My people will humble themselves  
 Humble themselves and pray  
 If they seek My face and humble themselves  
 And turn from their wicked ways  
 I will hear from heaven  
 And forgive their sin  
 I will hear from heaven  
 And heal their land

### Chorus

Lord heal our land  
 Father heal our land  
 Hear our cry  
 And turn our nation back to You  
 Lord heal our land  
 Hear us O Lord and heal our land  
 Forgive our sin  
 And heal our broken land

### Verse

Lord we bow our knee we humble ourselves  
 Humble ourselves and pray  
 Lord we seek Your face  
 We humble ourselves  
 And turn from our wicked ways  
 Father in Your mercy forgive our sin  
 Father in Your mercy come heal our land

*Words & Music: Robin Brooks | Tom Brooks*  
*Year & Publisher: © 1988 Integrity's Alleluia! Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors*  
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## WHOM SHALL I FEAR

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### Verse

You hear me when I call  
 You are my morning song  
 Though darkness fills the night  
 It cannot hide the light  
 Whom shall I fear  
 You crush the enemy underneath my feet  
 You are my sword and shield  
 Though troubles linger still  
 Whom shall I fear

### Chorus

I know Who goes before me  
 I know Who stands behind  
 The God of angel armies is always by my side  
 The One who reigns forever  
 He is a friend of mine  
 The God of angel armies is always by my side

### Verse

My strength is in Your name  
 For You alone can save  
 You will deliver me  
 Yours is the victory  
 Whom shall I fear  
 Whom shall I fear  
 (Whom shall I fear)

### Bridge

(And) nothing formed against me shall stand  
 You hold the whole world in Your hands  
 I'm holding on to Your promises  
 You are faithful, You are faithful

*Words & Music: Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | Scott Cash*  
*Year & Publisher: © 2012 Alletrop Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore*  
*Branch)); McTyeire Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch)); A*  
*Thousand Generations Publishing (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing);*  
*Sixsteps Songs (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing); Worship Together Music*  
*(Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)*  
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## OUR GOD

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### Verse

Water You turned into wine  
 Opened the eyes of the blind  
 There's no one like You  
 None like You

Into the darkness You shine  
 Out of the ashes we rise  
 There's no one like You  
 None like You

### Chorus

Our God is greater  
 Our God is stronger  
 God You are higher than any other  
 Our God is healer  
 Awesome in power, our God, our God

### Bridge

And if our God is for us  
 Then who could ever stop us  
 And if our God is with us  
 Then what could stand against  
 And if our God is for us  
 Then who could ever stop us  
 And if our God is with us  
 Then what could stand against  
 (Then) what could stand against

*Words & Music: Chris Tomlin | Jesse Reeves | Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman*  
*Year & Publisher: © 2010 Said And Done Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing); sixsteps*  
*Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing); Thankyou Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music*  
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## LET YOUR GLORY FALL

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### Verse

Father of creation  
 Unfold Your sov'reign plan  
 Raise up a chosen generation  
 That will march through the land  
 All of creation is longing  
 For Your unveiling of pow'r  
 Would You release Your anointing  
 Oh God let this be the hour

### Chorus

Let Your glory fall in this room  
 Let it go forth from here to the nations  
 Let Your fragrance rest in this place  
 As we gather to seek Your face

### Verse

Ruler of the nations  
 The world has yet to see  
 The full release of Your promise  
 The church in victory  
 Turn to us Lord and touch us  
 Make us strong in Your might  
 Overcome our weakness  
 That we could stand up and fight

### Bridge

Let Your kingdom come  
 (Let Your kingdom come)  
 Let Your will be done  
 (Let Your will be done)  
 Let us see on earth  
 (Let us see on earth)  
 The glory of Your Son

*Words & Music: David Ruis*  
*Year & Publisher: © 1992 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing (Admin. by K I Publishing)*  
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## PREPARE THE WAY

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### Verse

He has come  
 To bring light into the darkness  
 He has come  
 To bring freedom to the captives  
 He has come  
 To restore the brokenhearted  
 It's time to proclaim  
 The year of the Lord

### Chorus

Prepare the way (prepare the way)  
 Prepare the way for our Redeemer  
 Prepare the way (prepare the way)  
 Prepare the way for our Restorer  
 Make ready your heart  
 Make ready your home  
 Make ready the people of God  
 Prepare the way

### Verse

He has come  
 To bring hope to the hopeless  
 He has come  
 To comfort all who mourn  
 He has come  
 To heal our ev'ry sickness  
 It's time to proclaim  
 The year of the Lord

*Words & Music: Darrell Evans | Eric Nuzum*

*Year & Publisher: © 1999 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)*

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## HEAR OUR PRAISES

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### Verse

May our homes be filled with dancing  
 May our streets be filled with joy  
 May injustice bow to Jesus  
 As the people turn and pray

### Chorus

From the mountain to the valley  
 Hear our praises rise to You  
 From the heavens to the nations  
 Hear our singing fill the air

### Verse

May our light shine in the darkness  
 As we walk before the cross  
 May Your glory fill the whole earth  
 As the water over the seas

### Bridge

Hallelujah Hallelujah  
 Hallelujah Hallelujah

*Words & Music: Reuben Morgan*

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# The Church Beyond

■ FOCUS OF THE MONTH:

## **ORPHANAGE MINISTRY IN PEKANBARU**

**F**or the last two years, Covenant EFC has been working together with our partner churches in Pekanbaru to begin our Urban Missions thrust. We were introduced to a handful of Christian orphanages and we picked two to work with as our pioneer Urban Missions project in Indonesia.

Under the Urban Missions thrust, we believe that the basic needs of food, shelter and education must be met before we talk about establishing Disciplemaking Church Plants (DCP). Pekanbaru is located in the centre of Sumatra, the sixth largest island in the world. It is largely underdeveloped with millions of hectares of palm oil plantations and other vegetation. Social problems on this island such as poverty and unwanted pregnancies have led to children being trafficked or left on the streets to fend for themselves where they get involved in heroin and heroin-trafficking.

At the moment, we are assisting Panti Asuhan Anugrah (Grace Orphanage) to meet their basic needs and find a permanent home for the orphanage. It was started by Ps Simeon after he received a vision from God three years ago to start an orphanage in Pekanbaru. It currently houses 17 school-going children and a seven-year-old baby girl who was abandoned by her divorced parents. Despite this, the children are never lacking in basic needs like food. As Ps Simeon started with nothing, he only managed to rent a wooden warehouse next to a major trunk road to accommodate his own family and the 18 children. However, we believe a proper concrete shelter is important for the children and are exploring ways to achieve this.

As Urban Missions thrust is new in Covenant EFC, we have not yet established firm guidelines to help the needy. For example, how much to give to an orphanage, for what purposes and for how

support until he/she finishes school. Hence, we are looking at a probable time frame of 10 to 15 years as we cannot sponsor them short-term and abandon the children later. A self-supporting model may not be a possible solution as the adults taking care of the children have to look after their basic and spiritual needs, education and other necessities. This will not enable the project to have a self-supporting model like Business as Missions (BAM).

### PRAY

- The orphanage will find a permanent home.
- Covenant EFC can be a partner to meet the basic needs of the children.
- Covenant groups and short-term missions teams will visit and disciple the children on a regular basis.

*“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”*

**JAMES 1:27**

August 1  
Saturday  
2015

# God is Faithful: How He Fulfils His Promises

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 25:8, 11; Hebrews 11:32-40

### ■ Observation

How does God fulfil His promises according to verses 8 and 11 and Hebrews 11:32-40?

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### Deeper Reflection

The hall of fame of the biblical heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 shows three kinds of faith: exploits faith (vv. 33-35a), endurance faith (vv. 35b-38) and eschatological faith that looks for “a better resurrection” (v. 35b). The writer sums up “all these” heroes of faith with four characteristics. **Gained Approval:** Through their faith they “gained approval” from God (Heb 11:39a, also v. 2), “that which matters most”,<sup>1</sup> in contrast to gaining human approval. **Unfulfilled Promises:** They followed God faithfully, even in suffering (Heb 11:36-38), with God’s promises both fulfilled (Heb 11:33) and unfulfilled (Heb 11:39b), just like Abraham (Ge 25:8, 11; Heb 11:13). **Something Better:** Promises are unfulfilled “because God has provided something better for us” (Heb 11:40a). This is eschatological faith, which is both individual and corporate. **Made Perfect:** It is “only together with us” that they would “be made perfect” (Heb 11:40b, NIV) – the “divine consummation, a new heaven and earth”<sup>2</sup> (2 Pe 3:13; Rev 21:1), when Christ “appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He is” (1 Jn 3:2). Notice “us” and “they” in verse 40b: the total people of God, “of whom the world is not worthy” Heb 11:38), waiting in faith to enjoy “the full blaze of His glory”<sup>3</sup> together.

## ■ Application

How does the way God fulfils His promises impact my faith in God’s Word?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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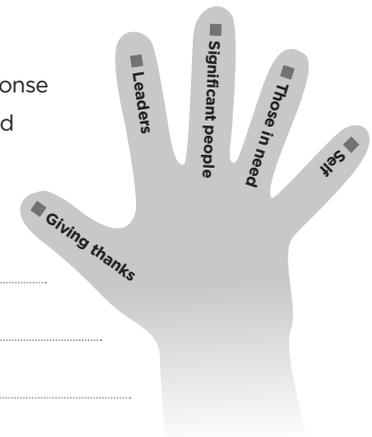
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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1982), 198  
<sup>2</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Zondervan, 2001), 341  
<sup>3</sup> William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Daily Study Bible (Saint Andrew Press, 1976; Theological Publications in India), 171

**August 2**  
Sunday  
2015

■ **Scripture** .....

■ **Observation**

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■ **Application**

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■ **Prayer**

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**The Past Week**

**REVIEW**

*What was my high point and my low point for the week?*

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*What gave me life and what drained me?*

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*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

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August 3  
Monday  
2015

## Seeing God in Ishmael's Genealogy

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 25:12-18 with 16:10, 17:20 and 21:12-13

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about God in verses 12 to 18 with Genesis 16:10, 17:20 and 21:12-13?

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### Deeper Reflection

Genealogy has an important theological function in Genesis. It represents humanity created in God's image (Ge 1:27; 5:1-2; 9:6-7) that God seeks to redeem through Abraham and his descendants: "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Ge 12:1-3). Genesis has two kinds of genealogy. **Vertical genealogy**: the chosen line of the woman's seed (Ge 3:15), from Adam to Noah (Ge 5:3-32), Shem to Abram (Ge 11:10-26), followed by the narratives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his 12 sons. **Horizontal genealogy**: the nations formed from Shem, Ham, and Japheth after the flood (Ge 10:1-32), the genealogies of Ishmael (Ge 25:12-18) and Esau (Ge 36:1-43) – connected to but outside of the chosen line. The horizontal genealogies must be viewed theologically in light of God seeking to bless the nations. Ishmael's genealogy shows the **reliable God** behind it. It "follows up God's promises to Abraham and Hagar"<sup>4</sup> (Ge 16:10; 21:12-13), and particularly His promise of "12 rulers" (v. 16 with 17:20). Behind it is the **reigning redemptive God**. Ultimately, the gracious sovereign God will redemptively draw to Himself "Kedar" and "Nebaioth", representatives of Ishmael's descendants (Isa 60:1-3, 7; note "Kedar" and "Nebaioth" in v. 13).

### ■ Application

What does it mean to me to know that God is a reliable and reigning redemptive God?

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### ■ Prayer

God of heaven and of the earth<sup>5</sup>, in You alone is my true security and confidence in life. You are the faithful God who keeps His Word. Help me to trust You in all ways at all times. Redeemer King of the nations, be gracious to Your Church, and bless us, and make Your face shine on us that Your ways and salvation may be known among all nations.<sup>6</sup> Amen.



<sup>4</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 343

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 24:3

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 67:1-2

August 4  
Tuesday  
2015

# My Personal Distinctive Faith Journey

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 25:19-26

### ■ Observation

Why does the narrative begin and end with Isaac's age – 40 (v. 20) and 60 (v. 26)?

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### Deeper Reflection

“Abraham became the father of Isaac” (v. 19b) points to Abraham’s faith journey of how he “became the father of Isaac”. It began with Sarah’s barrenness (Ge 11:30) and God’s promise of descendants through a son “from his own body” (Ge 12:7; 13:16; 15:4-5). Abraham grew in faith with successes and setbacks, until it was humanly impossible for him and Sarah to procreate (Ge 17:17) that God fulfilled His promise (Ge 21:1-2). After Abraham’s death, “God blessed Isaac” (Ge 25:14), whose journey also began with barrenness (v. 21). But their individual faith journeys were totally different. Isaac prayed to God concerning Rebekah’s barrenness. God gave a breakthrough in Rebekah’s barrenness by answering her prayer, and Sarah’s by fulfilling a promise. Like his father, Isaac had to wait on God, but with a difference. Isaac waited for 20 years – from age 40 (v. 20) to 60 (v. 26). But unlike Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah did not have to wait until they were beyond the childbearing age. God has a personal distinctive faith journey for you, and leading you and working in your life with His infinite creativity and sovereign freedom and wisdom to His glory, which may take many years before you see it.

## ■ Application

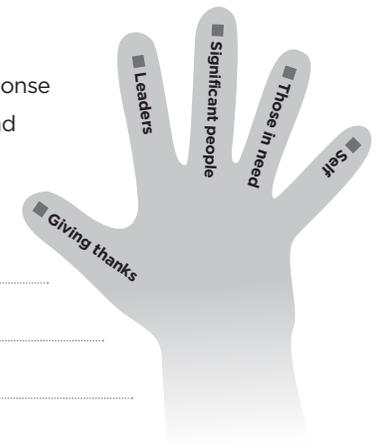
How has God been shaping my faith journey with Him?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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August 5  
Wednesday  
2015

# Theology of God Answering Prayers

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 25:21-23

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about God and prayer in verses 21 to 23?

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### Deeper Reflection

Five theological elements, often interrelated, run through the Book of Genesis in diverse ways. **Reality:** Human experiences that we can identify with. **Adversity:** The trials of faith of God’s people. **Sovereignty:** God is always in sovereign control over everything. **Destiny:** Under His sovereignty, God is leading His people, in reality and adversity, towards a destiny – His covenant purposes. **Mystery:** Divine ways that are inexplicable and unexplained – like how God answers prayer in verses 21 to 23. Isaac and Rebekah had a problem: “barrenness” (v. 21). So, Isaac prayed. God answered his prayer. Rebekah was pregnant. Problem solved. But the solution came with a problem: “the children struggled together within her” (v. 22a). Rebekah was perplexed: “If it is thus [God’s answer to prayer], why is this happening to me?” (v. 22b, ESV). How did God answer Isaac’s prayer? He solved one problem by creating another. Would you like God to answer your prayers like that? Isn’t it quite scary to pray then? It is here that we must know God. How God answers our prayers is His prerogative. God is perfect in all His ways (cf. Dt 32:4). God answers prayers according to His purposes. Yet, so often in our prayer we tell God very specifically what to do.

## ■ Application

How do the ways God answers my prayers help me in growing to know Him more?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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August 6  
Thursday  
2015

# The God We Inquire Of

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 25:22-23

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about inquiring of God in verses 22 to 23?

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### Deeper Reflection

Sometimes God speaks to us first before things happen. But there are times things happen, we inquire of God, and then God speaks to us – as in Rebekah’s case (vv. 22-23). It is important to know the God whom we inquire of, as revealed in His response to Rebekah’s inquiry (v. 23). **God’s Word: We stand on it** – “The LORD said to her:” The lives of Jacob and Esau, as the narrative unfolds, would be shaped according to what God had said about them. When God has spoken, His Word stands, because it is God who has spoken, and therefore, we can and must stand on His Word. Not uncommonly, God’s Word is “tested” (Ps 12:6; Pr 30:5), and accordingly also our faith in His Word. **God’s Ways: God can surprise us** – “the older will serve the younger”. It was a reversal of normal convention (Dt 21:15-17). God’s ways are not our ways, and His ways are higher than ours (Isa 55:8-9). For Jacob, he owed his supremacy to God’s sovereign gracious choice, not natural rights. **God’s Will: Nothing can stop it.** Soon Isaac would act contrary to God’s will, favouring Esau over Jacob (Ge 27). But no human mistake can obstruct God from fulfilling His will (Isa 14:27).

## ■ Application

What do I observe about God’s ways in my life?

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## ■ Prayer

God who spoke into existence the universe, Your Word is upright and true, and all Your work is done in faithfulness.<sup>7</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but Your Word endures forever.<sup>8</sup> You nullify and frustrate the plans and counsel of the nations, but Your plans and purposes stand forever.<sup>9</sup> Strengthen me to submit to Your ways and stand in Your Word. Amen.



<sup>7</sup> Psalm 33:4

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 24:35; Isaiah 40:8

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 33:10-11

August 7  
Friday  
2015

# The Human Side in God's Purpose

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 25:24-28

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about the covenant family (Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob) in verses 24 to 28 in relation to Genesis 25:21-23?

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### Deeper Reflection

A particular contrast is observed in Genesis 25:21-34: God is prominently present in verses 21 to 23 (“the LORD” repeated four times), whereas God is not mentioned at all in verses 24 to 34. Verses 24 to 34 present only the human side of things. Esau and Jacob were totally different from each other (v. 27). Esau was an “aggressive hunter”, a “sportsman, rough, wild, free, boisterous and exciting”<sup>10</sup> – an extrovert; whereas Jacob was a “reflective nomad”, a “settled man, stable, quiet, thoughtful, civilised”<sup>11</sup> – an introvert. The text makes no value judgment on them. By nature we may be like Esau or Jacob as God has created us. However, how we live by that nature can have good or bad consequences, as the story of Esau and Jacob unfolds. Isaac and Rebekah showed parental favouritism (v. 27). Husband and wife were not on the same page in parenting. Something had gone wrong in this marriage “made in heaven” (Ge 24). And Isaac loved Esau because “he loved what Esau gave him to eat”<sup>12</sup> – for “self-gratification”.<sup>13</sup> God allows the human side of things to take its course, without His purposes being thwarted (v. 23; cf. Job 42:2). On our part, we must keep living our lives in line with God’s purposes.

## ■ Application

How do I live my life in line with God's purposes?

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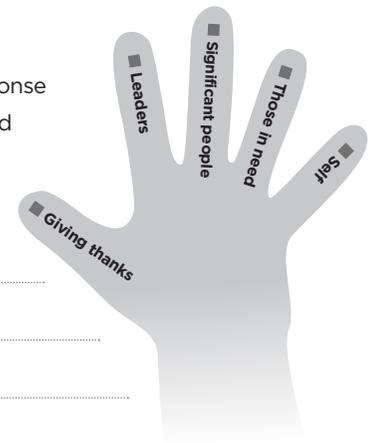
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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>10</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker, 1998, 1996), 448  
<sup>11</sup> Allen P. Ross, 448  
<sup>12</sup> Allen P. Ross, 449  
<sup>13</sup> Allen P. Ross, 449

August 8  
Saturday  
2015

# Am I Like Jacob or Esau?

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 25:27, 29-34

## ■ Observation

What do you observe about Jacob and Esau in verses 29 to 34?

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## Deeper Reflection

The story in Genesis 25:29-34 is built around the repeated key word “birthright” (vv. 31-34) – “the rights of the firstborn”.<sup>14</sup>

The firstborn “has privileged status (Ge 49:3) and the right of succession (2 Ch 21:3)” and “receives a double portion of the father’s inheritance (Dt 21:17)”.<sup>15</sup> “In Abraham’s family, the one who possesses the birthright inherits the Abrahamic covenant.”<sup>16</sup> The heritage was most importantly a “spiritual heritage”.<sup>17</sup> Here, we look at the hearts and acts of Jacob and Esau. Jacob was right in his heart, but wrong in his acts, and Esau was wrong in both. Jacob’s great desire for the birthright shows he “regarded spiritual things highly”.<sup>18</sup> But he exploited Esau’s state of being “famished” (vv. 29-30) and “about to die” (v. 32) to wrest from him his birthright (v. 31), showing “his lack of compassion and hospitality”.<sup>19</sup> Esau was impulsive, thoughtless, “without faith”,<sup>20</sup> “embracing the present and the tangible at any cost”<sup>21</sup> (vv. 31-33). He made his fatal choice (v. 33), and “ate and drank, and rose and went on his way” unconcerned (v. 34). “Despite all of his weaknesses, Jacob lives within the vision of faith”,<sup>22</sup> albeit an “immature”<sup>23</sup> and “flawed”<sup>24</sup> faith. How do I value spiritual things? Am I like Jacob or Esau?

## ■ Application

In what ways am I like Jacob and/or Esau and what changes do I need to make in my life?

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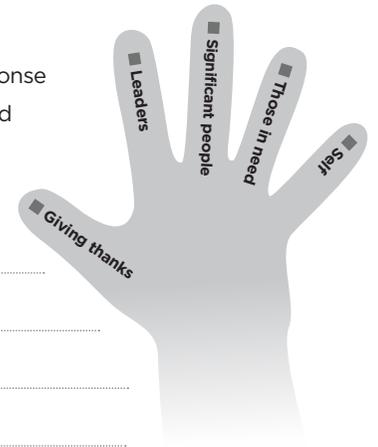
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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>14</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 363  
<sup>15</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 363  
<sup>16</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 364  
<sup>17</sup> Allen P. Ross, 444  
<sup>18</sup> Allen P. Ross, 444  
<sup>19</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 363  
<sup>20</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 354  
<sup>21</sup> Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1976), 152  
<sup>22</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 365  
<sup>23</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 354  
<sup>24</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 355

**August 9**  
Sunday  
2015

■ **Scripture** .....

■ **Observation**

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■ **Application**

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■ **Prayer**

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**The Past Week**

**REVIEW**

*What was my high point and my low point for the week?*

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*What gave me life and what drained me?*

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*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

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**REFLECT**

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?*

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**RESPOND**

*What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?*

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL  
August 2015 - Week 2**

**MAKING THINGS RIGHT**

Saying sorry and making things right will heal relationships.

**Scripture - Genesis 33:1-11**

**1. Activity Bite**

Give some reasons for the fights between you and your siblings or friends.

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** Why do you quarrel or fight over certain issues?

**Q2:** What do you do to make things right when you are in the wrong?

**Q3:** Why do you think God wants us to make things right after a quarrel?

**3. Learning Point**

Often times a quarrel starts because of disagreement or when we don't get what we want from the other person. It could also be due to both parties refusing to admit they are in the wrong. Quarrels or fights can break up relationships unless both sides are willing to forgive and choose to make things right. Saying "I am sorry" are three very hard words to say but if done right, it can mend a broken friendship and bring God's love back into the relationship. Like Jacob, you can also do things like give gifts or write a card for the other person as a sign to make things right.

**4. Action Point**

Is there anyone you need to say sorry to because of some disagreement? You can consider making a card, getting a gift or just saying sorry to make things right.

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I am sorry for some quarrels that I have started. Please help me to be humble to say sorry and to make things right. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

August 10  
Monday  
2015

# Staying in Promised Land Famine

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 26:1-6, 12-14

## ■ Observation

What do you discover about God in verses 1 to 6 and 12 to 14?

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## Deeper Reflection

“Walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Co 5:7) is the thrust of Genesis 26:1-6, 12-14. The “famine” in the Promised Land “forced” Isaac to go to “Gerar” (v. 1), “stopping” there “on his way to Egypt”,<sup>25</sup> “the traditional source of food”<sup>26</sup> (Ge 12:10; 42:1-2). Isaac was walking by sight. But God graciously “appeared to him” (v. 2a) and spoke to him: “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you” (v. 2). Had Isaac walked by faith, he would have waited upon God’s Word. “Sojourn in this land” (v. 3a). What? Stay in the land of famine? Obeying this command was conditional to God’s promise of His presence and blessing (vv. 3-4). In the reality of near starvation it is not easy to obey. Can we eat God’s promises? Think about Deuteronomy 8:3. By faith, Isaac obeyed God (v. 6), and God kept His promise. Isaac “sowed in that land” and “the LORD blessed him” with “a hundredfold” harvest (vv. 12-14). The literal rendering of verse 13 shows the immensely abundant blessing: “And the man became great, and he continually became greater, until he became very great.”<sup>27</sup> While God may not necessarily bless us materially when we live by His Word, He will certainly bless us spiritually.

## ■ Application

What is a “famine” in my life that I sense God is asking me to trust Him through and stay put in?

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## ■ Prayer

Lord, You watch over those who fear You, those who rely on Your unfailing love. You rescue them from death and keep them alive in times of famine. I put my hope in You. You are my help and my shield. My heart rejoices in You, for I trust in Your holy name. Let Your unfailing love surround me, Lord, for my hope is in You alone.<sup>28</sup> Amen.



<sup>25</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 368

<sup>26</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 368

<sup>27</sup> Allen P. Ross, 466

<sup>28</sup> Psalm 33:18-22

August 11  
Tuesday  
2015

# Straying from Faith to Fear

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 26:1-11

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about Isaac and God in verses 7 to 11?

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### Deeper Reflection

How quickly Isaac strayed from faith in God (vv. 1-6) to fear of man (v. 7 – “he was afraid”), and walked by sight and lived by circumstances. He lied about his wife, selfishly living by the philosophy of “better defiled than dead”.<sup>29</sup> In so doing he almost became a source of divine curse for the Philistines (v. 10 – “you would have brought guilt upon us”), instead of being a source of blessing God had called him to be – “all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” through him (v. 4). Isaac “had spent a long time”<sup>30</sup> in Gerar before his deception was discovered (vv. 8-9). “That Isaac and Rebekah enjoyed a long unmolested stay in Gerar shows that his fears were unfounded.”<sup>31</sup> But Isaac persisted in his fear. Unseen gracious divine protection must have been over the couple. Perhaps God was waiting for Isaac to move from fear to faith. Interestingly, the discovery of Isaac’s deception led to deliverance from danger (vv. 10-11). The discovery looks like it was made by chance: it happened when “Abimelech...looked out through the window” (v. 8). In reality, it was Gracious Providence. Do you see this Isaac in you? Remember that the God of Isaac is also your God.

## ■ Application

What is one fear that I must grow to walk by faith and trust God in?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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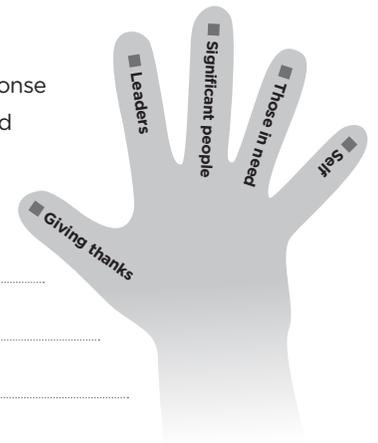
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<sup>29</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 313  
<sup>30</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1994), Vol. 2, 182  
<sup>31</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, Vol. 2, 190

August 12  
Wednesday  
2015

# “Now at Last the LORD”

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 26:12-22

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about God and Isaac in verses 12 to 22?

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### Deeper Reflection

God blessed Isaac with “a hundredfold” fruitfulness (vv. 12-14) despite the “long time” (v. 8) of him failing to walk by faith (vv. 7-11). How gracious is the faithful God! Prosperity (vv. 12-14) was immediately followed by adversity in conflicts over wells (vv. 15-21). But we must not miss God’s sovereignty over both prosperity and adversity. Sandwiching the conflicts over wells, we see how “the LORD blessed him” (v. 12) and how “at last the LORD has granted...ample space”<sup>32</sup> (v. 22). God appears to be silent and inactive in verses 15 to 21. But God’s presence was there throughout, although unmentioned, because God had promised Isaac, “I will be with you” (v. 3). God’s presence with Isaac was also evident in His abundant blessings on him (vv. 12-14). Envy over Isaac’s prosperity caused the Philistines to stop up “all the wells” dug by Abraham and force Isaac to leave the city (vv. 15-17). Twice Isaac dug and found wells, but only to lose them to those who claimed to own them (vv. 18-21). Then, the LORD granted “ample space” (v. 22). Adversity may come upon you wave after wave, but keep walking with God faithfully and wait on Him patiently. There will come the time when you can declare, “Now at last the LORD.”

## ■ Application

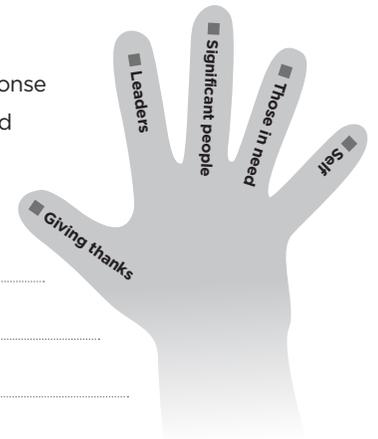
What challenges do I face in waiting on God until He speaks or acts?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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<sup>32</sup> Tanakh Translation, The Jewish Publication Society (1985, 1999)

August 13  
Thursday  
2015

## A God-filled Life and Journey

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 26:1-33

### ■ Observation

*How is the picture of Isaac's relationship with God presented in verses 1 to 33?*

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### Deeper Reflection

Verses 1 to 33 presents a picture of a God-filled life and journey. "The LORD" is repeated seven times (vv. 2, 12, 22, 24, 25, 28, 29) – all in reference to Isaac's relationship with God. A God-filled life is not without adversity (v. 1, "famine"), or adversary – conflicts over wells (vv. 18-22). But, twice God took the initiative to appear to Isaac to speak to him when he faced adversity (v. 2) and adversary, encouraging him, "Do not fear" (vv. 23-24). In both divine appearances, God's presence with him was promised (v. 3) and assured (v. 24). The envious and hostile Abimelech who said to Isaac, "Go away from us" (vv. 14-16) later "came to him from Gerar" (vv. 26-27) to seek a pact of peace, because "We see plainly that the LORD had been with you" (vv. 28-29). Then again, such is not always the case. For the world hates Jesus' followers because they are not of the world (Jn 15:19). A God-filled life is marked by the pursuit of God – building altars to God and calling upon His name (v. 25); and living for God's purposes (vv. 3-5). But it is not without spiritual setbacks (vv. 7-11). However, "the faithful celebrate God's grace and are not overcome with self-guilt or destroyed by self-contempt".<sup>33</sup>

### ■ Application

*In what area(s) of my life do I need to make changes to grow towards a God-filled life?*

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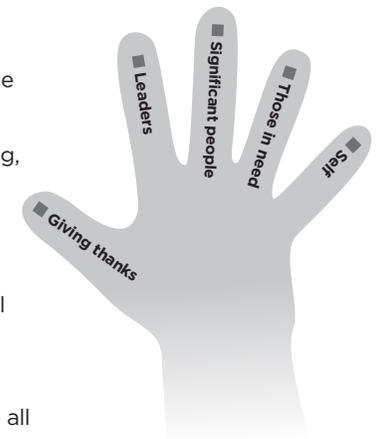
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### ■ Prayer

Glorious and gracious Father, fill me with the knowledge of Your will in spiritual wisdom and understanding, that I may live to always honour and please You, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, and growing to know You deeper. Strengthen me with all Your glorious power so that I may have the endurance and patience that I need, always thanking You in all things.<sup>34</sup> Amen.



<sup>33</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 372

<sup>34</sup> Adapted from Colossians 1:9-12

August 14  
Friday  
2015

# God of the Next Generation

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 26:1-33

### ■ Observation

What is the significance of the two repeated key expressions, “blessing” (vv. 3, 12, 24, 29) and “Abraham his father” or its equivalent (vv. 3, 5, 15, 18, 24), in the story of Isaac in Genesis 26?

### Deeper Reflection

Genesis 26 contains striking parallels between the Isaac and Abraham narratives: famine (v. 1 with Ge 12:10); sister-wife motif (vv. 7-11 with Ge 12:11-20; chapter 20); wealth, quarrels, and separation (vv. 12-22 with Ge 13); building altars and calling upon God’s name (v. 25 with Ge 12:7-8; 13:4, 18). Genesis 26 “portrays Isaac as very much walking in his father’s footsteps”.<sup>35</sup> Two key expressions in Genesis 26 – “blessing” (vv. 3, 12, 24, 29) and “Abraham his father” or its equivalent (vv. 3, 5, 15, 18, 24) – point to the theme of Isaac’s story: “Isaac inherits his father’s blessings.”<sup>36</sup> Isaac is the next generation of Abraham. And Isaac has to face his generation’s hostile world – Abimelech<sup>37</sup> (vv. 15-17), who forgot or ignores the covenant his father had made with Abraham (Ge 21:22-32). But more importantly, we see here the God of the next generation. When we think of the next generation of God’s people, our foundational starting point must be the **God** of the next generation. Abraham is no more around, but the God of Abraham, the Everlasting and Almighty Covenant God remains (Ge 17:1; 21:33). The God of Abraham will become the God of Isaac (v. 26).

## ■ Application

How does God being the God of the next generation motivate me to influence them for Christ?

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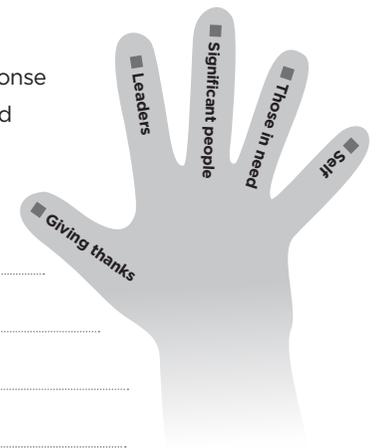
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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.




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<sup>35</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, Vol. 2, 196  
<sup>36</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 367  
<sup>37</sup> “Abimelech” is “probably a favourite dynastic name”, and Abimelech in Genesis 26 is of “the next generation”. (Bruce K. Waltke, 367)

August 15  
Saturday  
2015

# The Next Generation: Faithfulness and Failures

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 25:27-28; 26:1-6, 12-14; 27:1-4

## ■ Observation

What do you observe about Isaac when he was younger (Ge 26:1-6, 12-14) and when he was older (vv. 27-28; Ge 27:1-4)?

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## Deeper Reflection

In Genesis 26, Isaac was the next generation of Abraham. The Isaac here is Isaac in his younger days, before the birth of their sons (Ge 25:21-26). For “if Isaac and Rebekah had children their marriage would have been apparent to the Philistines from the beginning”<sup>38</sup> (Ge 26:7-9). Interestingly, the story of Isaac in his younger days is sandwiched by two records of Isaac when he was older (Ge 25:27-34 and Ge 27:1-4). The younger Isaac was marked by his faithfulness to God, living a God-filled life. But the two records of the older Isaac focus on his serious failures: favouring Esau over Jacob for the family headship (vv. 27-28; Ge 27:1-4) against God’s will (Ge 25:23), which resulted in deception over birthright (Ge 25:29-34) and blessing (Ge 27:5-29). The older Isaac’s family was chequered by rivalry between husband and wife that led to rivalry between their children. The next generation of Abraham started well, staying on course in God’s purposes, but finished badly by straying away. But this does not hinder God from continuing to fulfil His redemptive purposes. The God of Abraham who became the God of Isaac will become the God of Jacob (Ge 28-50). God is always the faithful God of the next generation!

## ■ Application

How does the possibility of the next generation failing God challenge me in seeking to influence them for Christ?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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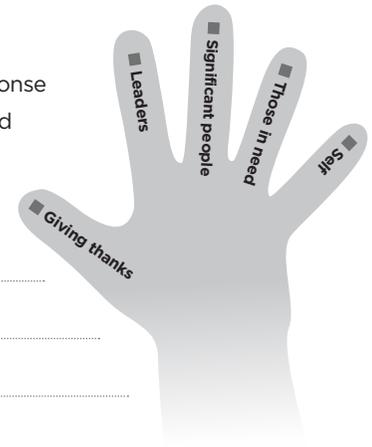
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<sup>36</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 367

**August 16**  
Sunday  
2015

■ **Scripture** .....

■ **Observation**

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■ **Application**

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■ **Prayer**

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**The Past Week**

**REVIEW**

*What was my high point and my low point for the week?*

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*What gave me life and what drained me?*

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*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

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**REFLECT**

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?*

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**RESPOND**

*What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?*

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL  
August 2015 - Week 3**

**KNOWING GOD**

Our Christian life should be about knowing God more.

**Scripture - Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17**

**1. Activity Bite**

How much do you know about your father or mother's childhood days? Talk to them to find out as much information as possible.

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** Do you feel you know your parents deeper now that you know more about their childhood days?

**Q2:** Why is it important to know who God is?

**Q3:** In what ways do you think you can know more of God?

**3. Learning Point**

When we believe in God, it is not about following a set of religious rules but it is about having a personal relationship with Him. It is like having a personal relationship with your parents which is based on love. Knowing God helps us get closer to Him and increases our faith. For example, when we learn that He is a God who will never leave us, we will feel safer and more peaceful. However, knowing Him doesn't come automatically. We need to be active in reading the Bible, praying to Him and trusting Him in all situations.

**4. Action Point**

Think of a way that you find helpful for you to know God more. For example, it could be reading the Bible daily, listening to Christian music or attending the Sunday Children's Service more regularly. Choose one and do it regularly. Observe how you have grown over a period of time (for example, after three months).

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I want to know You more. Increase my faith to trust You all the time. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.

August 17  
Monday  
2015

# O Food! Grievous Food!

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 27:1-17 with 25:27-28

## ■ Observation

What do you observe about Isaac in verses 1 to 17 with Genesis 25:27-28?

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## Deeper Reflection

The story of Jacob deceptively stealing the blessing Isaac intended for Esau in Genesis 27:1 to 28:9 is built around the key word “blessing”. The word as a verb and noun occurs 28 times (88 times in Genesis). The “blessing” here is defined as “the blessing of Abraham” with God’s promises of “descendants” and “the land” (Ge 28:3-4). Isaac intended to give this blessing to Esau (vv. 1-4). What made Isaac want to give Esau the blessing? Food! Esau, the firstborn, was his favourite son “because he had a taste for wild game” (Ge 25:27). Food! He called Esau to “hunt some wild game; and prepare a savoury dish such as I love” that he might eat it and bless him (vv. 3-4). Food! When Rebekah overheard what Isaac said to Esau, she schemed to wrest the blessing for her favourite son, Jacob (v. 5; see Ge 25:27). What was her strategy (vv. 6-17)? Food! Three Hebrew “food” words – “hunt”, “wild game”<sup>39</sup> and “savory dish/food”<sup>40</sup> – occur 17 times in Genesis 27! Isaac “follows his mouth, not his heart”.<sup>41</sup> He didn’t live by God’s Word – “the older shall serve the younger” (Ge 25:23), but lived only to satisfy his physical appetite. But, more seriously, the son of destiny was “seeking to thwart the divine word”.<sup>42</sup>

## ■ Application

In what specific ways am I challenged by the negative example of Isaac’s spiritual life?

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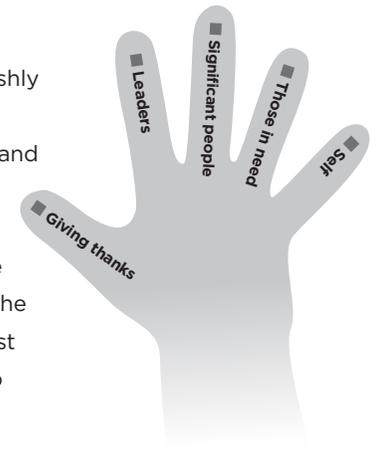
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## ■ Prayer

Merciful God, forgive me for foolishly setting my heart on the things of this world that are passing away, and pursuing them. Teach me what it means to count whatever things that are gain to me as loss for the sake of Christ. Help me to grasp the surpassing value of knowing Christ and gaining Him,<sup>43</sup> and to learn to live by “to live is Christ”.<sup>44</sup> Amen.



<sup>39</sup> Or, “venison,” Allen P. Ross, 477

<sup>40</sup> The Hebrew words “hunt” (vv. 3, 5, 27) and “wild game” (vv. 3, 5, 7, 19, 25, 30, 31, 33) are of the same word family; “savory dish/food” (vv. 4, 7, 9, 14, 17, 31).

<sup>41</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 373

<sup>42</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 374

<sup>43</sup> Philippians 3:7-8

<sup>44</sup> Philippians 1:21

August 18  
Tuesday  
2015

## Loss of Spiritual Sensitivity

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 27:18-29

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about Isaac in verses 18 to 29?

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### Deeper Reflection

Isaac in his old age had lost the spiritual vitality that he once had in his younger days (Ge 25:21-23; 26:1-33); his loss of spiritual sensitivity is evident in Genesis 27:18-29. When Jacob, pretending to be Esau, brought to his father his favourite food, Isaac was surprised that Esau did it so quickly (vv. 18-20). As Isaac could not see (Ge 27:1), he sought to confirm Esau's identity (v. 21) – by using his physical senses. But all the senses he used failed him. He heard the voice and felt the person, but only to become confused: “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau” (v. 22). He “did not recognise him”, and yet “he proceeded to bless him” (v. 23, NIV). Even then, he was still unsure: “Are you really my son Esau?” (v. 24). His taste buds failed him: He could not distinguish between stewed “venison”<sup>45</sup> and stewed mutton (v. 25; see v. 9). His fallible sense of smell led him to mistakenly bless Jacob for Esau (vv. 26-27). Isaac's physical blindness could be “symbolic”<sup>46</sup>: “His physical blindness matches his spiritual blindness.”<sup>47</sup> “To see...was a term connected to prophetic powers.”<sup>48</sup> All because Isaac walked by food, not by faith.

### ■ Application

How can I keep myself from losing my spiritual vitality and sensitivity?

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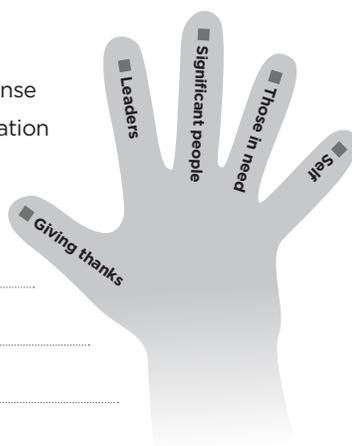
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### ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.




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<sup>45</sup> Allen P. Ross, 477

<sup>46</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 376

<sup>47</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 376

<sup>48</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 376 – citing Everett Fox

August 19  
Wednesday  
2015

# God's Will, Man's Way

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 27:5-27

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about Rebekah and Jacob in verses 5 to 27?

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### Deeper Reflection

In her scheming (vv. 5-17), Rebekah's "spiritual values are sound", for she acted in light of the divine prenatal oracle for Jacob (Ge 25:23); but "her method is deplorable". She exploited Isaac's blindness. "To exploit on a man's blindness was not only prohibited on grounds of humanity; God Himself watched over dealings with the blind and deaf (Lev. 19:14; Dt 27:18)." Jacob lied to Isaac blatantly in speech and silence (vv. 18-27). And "with the worst kind of piety", he lied using God's name, which was "blasphemy". Be careful how we use God's name (cf. Ex 20:7). Rebekah and Jacob had no love for Isaac, nor faith in God. We may think that our acts in God's things are for God, but in reality, it may be for the self. Warning: Attempting to obtain God's blessings – in life, work or ministry – by self-oriented manipulative measures, which appear to be successful but may not be so at all in reality. Rebekah disappears after Genesis 27:46. "The narrator memorialises Deborah, her nurse, not Rebekah (Ge 35:8) and makes no notice of her death", in contrast to Sarah (Ge 23:1-4). Rebekah gained nothing eventually.

## ■ Application

How can I grow in awareness, that in going about the things of God, it is truly for God and not myself?

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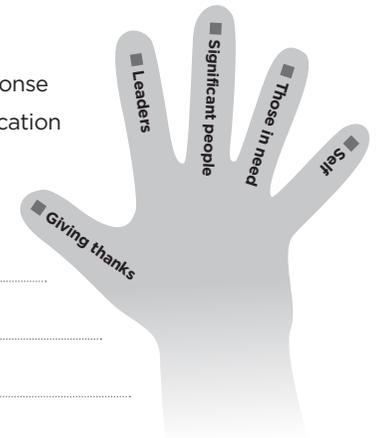
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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>49</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 377  
<sup>50</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis, The Old Testament Library* (Westminster, 1972), 277  
<sup>51</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe, *Genesis, The Preacher's Commentary* (Nelson, 1987), 222  
<sup>52</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 379  
<sup>53</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 378



August 21  
Friday  
2015

# Good Beginning, Poor Building

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 27:1-46

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about the character and relationship of Isaac's family members in verses 1 to 46?

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### Deeper Reflection

Isaac's family was a family with a destiny. But it became degenerated and disintegrated. **Flawed character** marked every member. Nothing good is said of them at all in the text. Esau was "misguided and violent", Isaac was "sensuous and weak", Rebekah was "deceptive and manipulative", and Jacob was "opportunistic and unprincipled".<sup>57</sup> What led to this stage? **Forgotten values.** There was "a marriage made with care"<sup>58</sup> (Genesis 24) and "children bathed in prayer"<sup>59</sup> (Ge 25:21-23). Now this family was "made up of people committed to their own ends which were to be achieved by any and all means irrespective of who might be abused in the process".<sup>60</sup> The result was a **fragmented family.** The various scenes in Genesis 27:1 to 28:5 show that "the family is never together"<sup>61</sup>: Isaac with Esau (vv. 1-4), Rebekah with Jacob (vv. 5-17), Isaac with Jacob (vv. 18-29), Isaac with Esau (vv. 30-41), Rebekah with Jacob (vv. 42-45) and Isaac with Jacob (Ge 28:1-5). Rebekah spoke to Isaac only once (v. 46). If only Isaac and Rebekah had remained in oneness as in their younger days (Ge 25:21-23), and lived by the Word of God together! How are we building our marriage and family?

## ■ Application

What change(s) do I need to make in building my marriage and family?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>57</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 374  
<sup>58</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe, 220  
<sup>59</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe, 220  
<sup>60</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe, 221  
<sup>61</sup> Allen P. Ross, 473

August 22  
Saturday  
2015

# Grace for the Disgraced!

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 28:13; 31:42, 53; 48:15

## ■ Observation

*How do God, Jacob and the narrator view Isaac's relationship with God in verse 13; Genesis 31:42, 53; and Genesis 48:15 after his great spiritual failure in Genesis 27?*

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## Deeper Reflection

Isaac is never mentioned again after his “disobedient plans to bless Esau”<sup>62</sup> which failed miserably, until his death (Ge 35:27-29). How sad it seems. But when God appeared to Jacob on his flight from home to his uncle’s place (Ge 28:5, 10-12) – immediately after Isaac’s tragic spiritual setback – God revealed Himself, not just as “the God of Abraham”, but also “the God of Isaac” (v. 13). God was still Isaac’s God. Twenty years later (Ge 31:41), when Isaac was still alive, Jacob called God “the fear of Isaac” (Ge 31:46). And the narrator expands it as “the fear of Isaac his father” (Ge 31:52). These are the only two times in the Bible that God is given such a title. What was in Jacob’s mind? What is its significance in relation to the sad story of Isaac? The divine title means “the One whom Isaac dreads”.<sup>63</sup> It hints to us something about Isaac’s relationship with God after Genesis 27. That was what Jacob knew about his father, despite his failures towards him as a father. That was also God’s view, represented by the narrator’s view.<sup>64</sup> Towards the end of his life, Jacob remembered his father as one who “walked faithfully” before God (Ge 48:15, NIV). What grace for the disgraced!

## ■ Application

*How does God’s grace for the disgraced help me in my walk with Him?*

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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<sup>62</sup> Allen P. Ross, 474  
<sup>63</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Eerdmans, 1995), 310  
<sup>64</sup> In biblical narratives, the narrator’s view (or narrator’s voice) represents the divine view.

**August 23**  
Sunday  
2015

■ **Scripture** .....

■ **Observation**

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■ **Application**

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■ **Prayer**

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**The Past Week**

**REVIEW**

*What was my high point and my low point for the week?*

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*What gave me life and what drained me?*

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*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

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**REFLECT**

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?*

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**RESPOND**

*What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?*

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL  
August 2015 - Week 4**

**THE BLAME GAME**

Be responsible for your own actions instead of blaming others.

**Scripture - Genesis 3:10-13**

**1. Activity Bite**

Play the Blame game. Say something to each other beginning with "It's your fault that..." For example, "It's your fault that I am eating too much chocolate."

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** How do you feel about blaming each other? Does it help in building up the relationship with others?

**Q2:** In what ways can blaming others cause quarrels to happen?

**Q3:** What should you be saying to replace "It's your fault..."?

**3. Learning Point**

Adam disobeyed God when he ate the fruit but he blamed Eve for the mess. Eve then blamed the serpent for causing them to sin but in actual fact they were responsible for their actions. If they chose not to eat the fruit, they would not have sinned against God. It is very easy for us to blame others for the mess we have created but we must take responsibility for our own actions. By doing that, we will begin to make things right rather than causing things to become worse. Owning up will also help each other forgive for any wrong done.

**4. Action Point**

Instead of "It's your fault", try practice saying "I'm sorry because I'm responsible for..."

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, I'm sorry for often blaming others for the mess I have created. I want to be responsible for my actions. I want to show Your love by my actions. Amen.

August 24  
Monday  
2015

## God in an Unwanted Journey

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 28:10-13a with 27:41-46 and 28:1-5

### ■ Observation

How would you understand verses 10 to 12 theologically with its continuity from Genesis 27:41-46 and Genesis 28:1-5?

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### Deeper Reflection

“Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran” (v. 10). This marks a new journey in Jacob’s life. But it was not a journey he wanted to take. Jacob was now “a fugitive from the results of his sin, a troubled son in search of his place in life, a shrewd shepherd setting out to find a wife”<sup>65</sup> (Ge 27:41-45; 28:1-2). The route from Beersheba to Haran was a “long, arduous route”.<sup>66</sup> Jacob was in a “solitary, homeless and precarious condition”,<sup>67</sup> where the “comfort of his parents’ tents has been replaced by a stone”<sup>68</sup> (v. 11). But little did he know that God was walking behind him and before him. For in this unwanted journey would be an unexpected encounter with God (vv. 12-13a), which would begin a life-transforming journey. “Jacob sets out to find a wife, but first God finds him.”<sup>69</sup> You may have got yourself on an unwanted journey. You have to leave or you are forced to leave your secure and comfortable “Beersheba”. It is an unwanted journey towards an uncertain destination. Despite Jacob’s “sinfulness and weakness”,<sup>70</sup> God was in his unwanted journey. Will not God also be in yours?

### ■ Application

How does knowing that God is in my unwanted journeys help me in discipleship?

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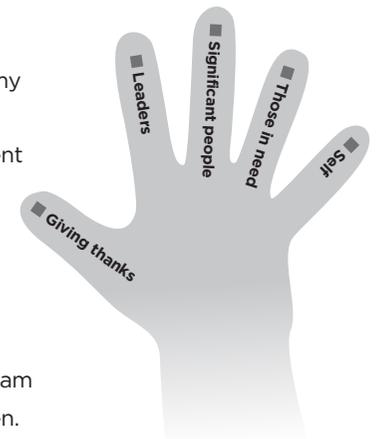
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### ■ Prayer

Loving and wise God who knows my heart, You know how I really wish I don’t have to go through my present rough and tough journey. But God, You are with me on it, though oftentimes, I don’t feel Your presence. Hold my hand as I follow You, trusting in Your Word, “You don’t understand now what I am doing, but someday you will.” Amen.



<sup>65</sup> Allen P. Ross, 483

<sup>66</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 388

<sup>67</sup> Derek Kidner, 158

<sup>68</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 388

<sup>69</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 395

<sup>70</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 387

August 25  
Tuesday  
2015

# Transforming Revelation in the Ordinary

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 28:11-19

### ■ Observation

What is the theological significance of the word “place” being repeated six times in verses 11 to 19 (see vv. 11, 16, 17, 19)?

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### Deeper Reflection

The word “place” repeated six times in verses 11 to 19 form a pair of contrast. It is repeated three times in verse 11 alone to emphasise the ordinariness of “that place” – a place of sunset, stopover, stones and sleep. But this ordinary place is transformed into a sacred place: “Surely the LORD is in this place” (v. 16), “How awesome is this place!” (v. 17), and “he called the name of that place Bethel” (v. 19), which means “the house of God” (v. 22). What brings about the transformation? The revelation of God (vv. 12-15). Notice the theological progression: from ordinary routine (v. 11) to divine revelation (vv. 12-15) to spiritual realisation (vv. 16-17) to discipleship response (vv. 18-22). More often than not, God’s revelation of Himself to us is not in the spectacular, but in Scripture where He has revealed Himself and His heart and mind, and in the daily ordinariness of life, not just in religious settings. The “written revelation of God makes believers aware of His presence and prompts them to a higher level of living”<sup>71</sup> towards transformation, which is theological and spiritual, not physical. The ordinary “place” has become sacred, but nothing has changed physically. What has changed is Jacob.

## ■ Application

How has God revealed Himself to me in Scripture and in the daily ordinariness of life?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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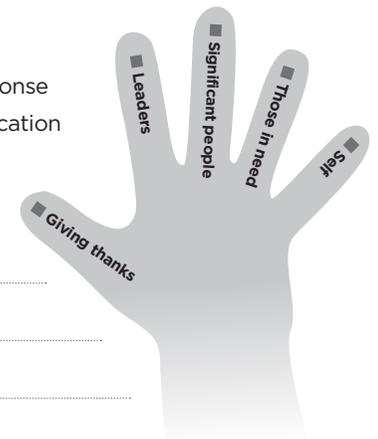
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<sup>71</sup> Allen P. Ross, 494

August 26  
Wednesday  
2015

# “I Did Not Know It”

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 28:11-13a, 16-17

## ■ Observation

What does Jacob’s expression “I did not know it” (v. 16) tell us about Jacob and God in verses 11-13a, 16-17?

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## Deeper Reflection

When Jacob woke up, recalling God’s revelation to him in a dream, he realised, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it” (v. 16). “The LORD is in this place” is more than just the presence of God’s presence. God’s presence is a dynamic active presence (cf. Ex 13:21-22; 14:19-20, 24-25) – quietly at times though. God is with us doing a life-transforming work in us, accomplishing His good purposes for us. There are times we are unaware of this divine active presence until a later time. There are times we sense God is doing something in our lives, but we cannot quite pinpoint what it is. God’s active presence is often in our daily ordinary and mundane affairs. In times when God’s absence is so profoundly felt, we cry out, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1-2). But God alone knows why, and He is with us. Or, when we are in “the lowest pit” and “the darkest depths” (Ps 88:6, NLT) of prolonged perplexing sufferings that cause us to ask, “How long, O Lord?” (Ps 13:1). But God alone knows “how long”, and He is with us. St Augustine said, “God is with us more than we are with ourselves.”

## ■ Application

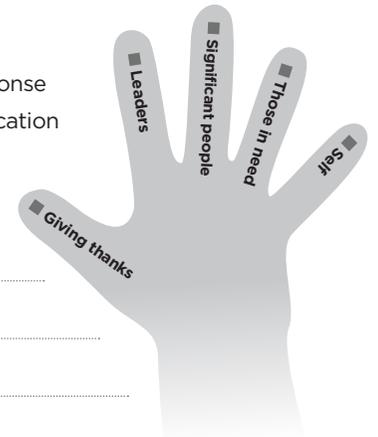
How do I relate God’s active presence, which may be quiet at times, to my life?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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August 27  
Thursday  
2015

## Supreme Display of Divine Grace

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 28:13-15

### ■ Observation

*How is God's grace manifested towards Jacob when He spoke to him in verses 13 to 15?*

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### Deeper Reflection

Verses 13 to 15 is “a supreme display of divine grace”.<sup>72</sup> It is grace because it is unsought. God took the initiative to seek Jacob out. It is grace because it is undeserved. God sought to bless Jacob because He wanted to. **Gracious God of my past:** Jacob had lied to his father and about God, amounting to blasphemy (Ge 27:18-20), yet there was “no word of reproach or demand”<sup>73</sup> from God. Silence is not condoning. God will deal with the sinful Jacob, but not now. Bring your sinful past, however awfully sinful, to the gracious God, and let Him receive and restore you to Himself redemptively (Eph 1:7-8a). **Gracious God of my present:** The present state of the lonely homeless fugitive sleeping on a stone in a desolate place (Ge 28:10-11) – the result of his past sins – was miserable and meaningless. But the visitation of the gracious God gave meaning to Jacob's life in his present plight. **Gracious God of my future:** God gave Jacob in exile a future in His redemptive purposes vv. 13-14), and promises of His protective presence (v. 15). Similarly, God has for Israel in exile in Babylon “plans for welfare...to give you a future and a hope” (Jer 29:10-14). What redemptive grace!

### ■ Application

*How is the supreme display of God's grace evident in my life and how do I respond to it?*

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### ■ Prayer

God of all grace,<sup>74</sup> it is grace that I come to see how sinful I am before God. It is grace that refuses to accept “Depart from me, for I am a sinner, O Lord!”<sup>75</sup> It is grace that answers my cry “God, be merciful to me, the sinner!”<sup>76</sup>

It is divine grace most supreme when the righteous died for the unrighteous that the unrighteous can become the righteousness of God!<sup>77</sup>



<sup>72</sup> Derek Kidner, 158

<sup>73</sup> Derek Kidner, 158

<sup>74</sup> 1 Peter 5:10

<sup>75</sup> Luke 5:8

<sup>76</sup> Luke 18:13

<sup>77</sup> 1 Peter 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:21

August 28  
Friday  
2015

# God of “Wherever” and “Until”

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 28:15

### ■ Observation

What do you learn about God in verse 15?

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### Deeper Reflection

The theological meaning of verse 15 is this: God’s protective presence is with us “wherever” we go, “until” He has accomplished His purposes for us. **Presence of God:** “I am with you” is synonymous to “I will not leave you” (cf. Dt 31:8). God’s presence with His people “assured them that they did not have to accomplish His plan by themselves”,<sup>78</sup> just like Moses when he lacked confidence to deliver God’s people from powerful Egypt (Ex 3:11-12). **Protection of God:** “I will keep you...and will bring you back to this land.” “God’s presence would guarantee”<sup>79</sup> His protection and preservation. God’s protective presence will be with us “wherever” we go. “Wherever” includes good times and bad times, when we do wrong before God and when people wrong us – as Jacob’s story unfolds. **Purpose of God:** “until I have done what I have promised you.” “The promise of divine protection does not exclude conflict and tension, but it does guarantee the outcome for the good of the covenant and its recipient.”<sup>80</sup> God’s purpose for Jacob was partially fulfilled over 20 difficult years (Ge 29-31; see 31:38-41). Thus, on our part, we need **perseverance in God** (cf. Jas 1:2-4).

## ■ Application

How can I appropriate verse 15 in my life?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>78</sup> Allen P. Ross, 490  
<sup>79</sup> Allen P. Ross, 490  
<sup>80</sup> Allen P. Ross, 491

August 29  
Saturday  
2015

# First Thing in the Morning

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 28:18-22

### ■ Observation

What was the first thing Jacob did when he “rose early in the morning” (vv. 18-22) and what is its significance?

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### Deeper Reflection

When Jacob “rose early in the morning”, the first thing he did was to “take the stone” – his pillow (v. 18a). It was a spiritual exercise. Jacob was preparing to worship God who met him and spoke to him (Ge 28:13-15). Respond to God’s Word with worship. **Commemoration:** Jacob “set up” the stone “as a pillar” (v. 18b) to commemorate the divine visitation, which marked a new chapter in his life. Commemorate particular starting points, turning points and completion points of your spiritual pilgrimage. We can look back to these significant moments for encouragement in our present challenges, and for endurance towards an unknown future. **Consecration:** Jacob “poured oil on its top” (v. 18b) – an act of consecration. Jacob consecrated the place from the inside out. Exodus 30:25-30 shows that consecration of place (vv. 25-29) and of person (v. 30) go together inseparably. **Commitment:** “Jacob made a vow” (vv. 20-22) – a commitment to God with gratitude for His gracious promises of His presence, provision and protection. Where there is no such consecration and commitment, “there is probably very little apprehension of what the spiritual life is all about”.<sup>81</sup> Is this the first thing you do each morning?

## ■ Application

What is my conviction and practice like in consecration and commitment to God as the first thing each morning?

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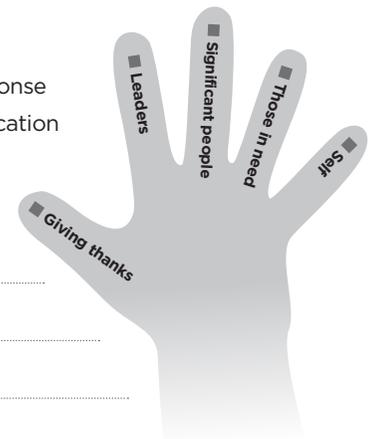
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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>81</sup> Allen P. Ross, 494

**August 30**  
Sunday  
2015

■ **Scripture** .....

■ **Observation**

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■ **Application**

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■ **Prayer**

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**The Past Week**

**REVIEW**

*What was my high point and my low point for the week?*

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*What gave me life and what drained me?*

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*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

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**REFLECT**

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?*

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**RESPOND**

*What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?*

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL  
August 2015 - Week 5**

**MY LIFE'S JOURNEY**

Everyone has his own life's journey in God.

**Scripture - Genesis 28:10-22**

**1. Activity Bite**

Try to remember as much as possible your own life's story since young up till now. Share with everyone in the group.

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** How is your life's story different from others? Why doesn't God make all stories the same?

**Q2:** How did you come to believe in Jesus as your God?

**Q3:** Do you think your life's story happened by chance? Where do you think God was in your life's story?

**3. Learning Point**

God created you to be unique and different from others - no one is alike or have the exact same life story. We have our own life's story because God wants to be personally involved in our lives. Jacob has his own story and we see how God was there with him. As you ponder upon your story, you will see that God was there all the time. He was there to comfort you when you were sad. He was there to protect your life from danger. He was there to provide all the food and clothes that you needed. This is not just your own life's journey but a journey together with God.

**4. Action Point**

Write a short story about your own life in a journal. Whenever you know God is present in any particular event, write down what you think God did. Pray and give thanks to Him.

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You so for my life's story. It is beautiful because You are there too. I am glad that You are with me all the time. Amen.

August 31  
Monday  
2015

37th Anniversary Celebration of Covenant EFC

# Discipleship Journey: Vision

## ■ Scripture

Psalm 1 and Psalm 150

### ■ Observation

What is the central theme of Psalm 1 and Psalm 150, and why does the Book of Psalms (the psalter) begin and end with these two themes?

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### Deeper Reflection

The Book of Psalms begins with the Word of God in Psalm 1, and ends with worship to God in Psalm 150. What is the theological significance of this particular canonical arrangement? The psalter can be viewed as a theological picture of a discipleship journey, for both the individual and the Church. The foundation of the discipleship journey must be the Word of God. And its maturation must be worship to God: a mature worshiper with a God-centered character. The theme of worship fills the last six psalms. Psalms 146 to 150 begin and end with “Praise the LORD”. “Praise the LORD” fills the entire Psalm 150 that climaxes with “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD” (v. 6). Let everything in my life be singularly worship to God! The Word-centered discipleship journey is a three-step-forward, two-step-back journey, characterised by the ups-and-downs songs of orientation, disorientation and reorientation in Psalms 2 to 144. The psalter is divided into five books,<sup>82</sup> with each ending with a doxology (41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48; 150:1-6). Discipleship must grow intensively and extensively in doxology. This must be our discipleship journey vision.

## ■ Application

How am I growing in depth in the Word of God and as a worshipper of God?

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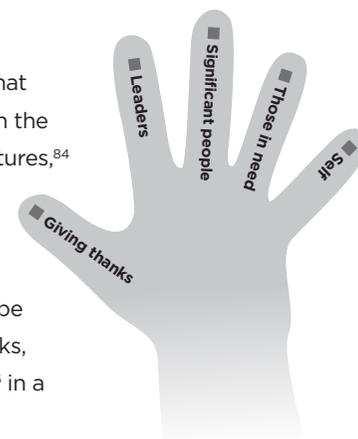
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## ■ Prayer

O Word of Life,<sup>83</sup> give me a heart that hungers for the Word of God. Open the Word to me when I open the Scriptures,<sup>84</sup> and open my mind to understand it.<sup>85</sup> Open my eyes to see God in Scripture as He has revealed Himself, that I may know Him, and be the true worshipper the Father seeks, to worship Him in spirit and truth,<sup>86</sup> in a manner of worthy of Him. Amen.



<sup>82</sup> Book 1: Psalms 1-41, Book 2: Psalms 42-72, Book 3: Psalms 73-89, Book 4: Psalms 90-106, Book 5: Psalms 107-150  
<sup>83</sup> 1 John 1:1  
<sup>84</sup> Luke 24:32  
<sup>85</sup> Luke 24:45  
<sup>86</sup> John 4:23







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