

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 ESV

Reminder that
GOD IS THE ONE
who ultimately provided
His own Son!

JULY 2015

*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 ESV

COVENANT EFC

2015 Memory Focus

FROM GENESIS (ESV)

JANUARY

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

Genesis 1:1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Worship Songs

I NEED THEE

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

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

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
Pty. Ltd.); Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)
CCLI License # 324618

WHOM SHALL I FEAR

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)
CCLI License # 324618

OUR GOD

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
Publishing); Vamos Publishing (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing); worshipstogether.com songs
(Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing); SHOUT! Music Publishing
 CCLI License # 324618

LET YOUR GLORY FALL

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)
 CCLI License # 324618

PREPARE THE WAY

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

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

Year & Publisher: © 1998 Hillsong Music Publishing

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The Church Beyond

■ FOCUS OF THE MONTH:

URBAN MISSIONS - REACHING CHILDREN IN THE SLUM COMMUNITIES OF MANILA

Urban Missions aims to reach the urban poor in gateway cities through a compassionate ministry that shares the love and life of our Lord Jesus. In 2013, we started a partnership with Care Channels International (CCI), an organisation who reaches out to some 80 slum communities in the Philippines through a network of local churches and non-government organisations (NGOs). We have begun building relationships with the pastors and leaders of six of these slum churches in Quezon City.

The Lord prompted us to set up children's libraries in these churches, and by divine appointment, we were led to a huge resource of children books. Subsequently, over 1,200 children books were shipped to these churches in early 2014. We thank God for guiding us and providing for the needy children with a long-term view to help them escape poverty in baby steps by encouraging reading and inspiring learning through books. We sensed God's prompting to import the Steady Readers programme into the Philippines. Over the last half a year, God has shown confirmation through affirmation by the local Manila church leaders and provided the financial resource to purchase the programme materials through an unchurched believer who wished to support education for the urban poor children!

Apart from setting up libraries and reading programmes, we have also had the privilege of bringing joy to disadvantaged children via the feeding programme, the sharing of craftwork with Sunday School teachers, home visits to pray for families of sponsored pupils (scholarship programme) and IT training for local trainers. Doors were opened for the sharing of the Gospel and a number of children

and mothers responded to the invitation and prayed to receive Christ as their Saviour.

One of the concerns of the slum churches is the means to reach out to youths in the communities, and they have identified computer access stations as being good outreach platforms. We are currently in the midst of working on the purchase of refurbished computers to set up IT stations in the churches. These will serve the communities as self-sustaining IT Service Stations where users will pay a minimal fee for printing, research work and other tasks. We are trusting God for the realisation of this vision as a bridge to reach out to youths in these slums who would otherwise remain unreachable.

PRAY

- We thank God for providing a skilled IT team to oversee the set up of the computer stations. Pray with us that the IT resource will be an effective avenue to reach out to the youths in the slum communities, and that the local church leaders will be faithful stewards of this resource.
- Pray that those who have responded to be trained teachers for Steady Readers will be committed to imparting their learned skills to the local volunteers in Manila so that they can independently run the literacy programme for the slum children in their communities.
- Pray that in the years to follow, many of these children will benefit from this pilot programme and can look forward to better lives through the little steps we are making in support of education, as the Lord leads.

“Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.”

JOHN 12:26

July 1
Wednesday
2015

“That You Will Know What Is...”

■ Scripture

Ephesians 1:18-23

■ Observation

What does God want us to know from Paul’s prayer for the Church in verses 18 to 23?

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Deeper Reflection

We must not overlook Paul’s emphasis on knowledge in his prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23: “in the knowledge of Him” (v. 17); “so that you will know what is” (v. 18). “Growth in knowledge is indispensable to growth in holiness. Indeed, knowledge and holiness are even more intimately linked than as means and end.”¹ Spiritual wisdom, revelation, and enlightenment (vv. 17-18) are indispensably necessary for such knowledge. What are we to know? Know **the person of God** (v. 17). Know **our prospect in God**: “the hope of His calling” (v. 18). It is the hope of sharing our loving God’s glory, which does not disappoint, by which we endure sufferings (Ro 5:1-5). Know **our preciousness to God**: “His holy people who are His rich and glorious inheritance” (v. 18, NLT). Thus, God says to us, “Anyone who harms you harms My most precious possession” (Zec 2:8, NLT). Know **the power of God**: “His incomparably great power for us who believe” (vv. 19-23, NIV) – Christ’s resurrection (v. 20a) and reigning power (vv. 20b-22), Thus, we can be faithful to Jesus, “the first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life”, until death in whatever tribulation we suffer (Rev 2:8-10).

■ Application

What does it mean to me personally to know what Paul asks of God in Ephesians 1:18-23?

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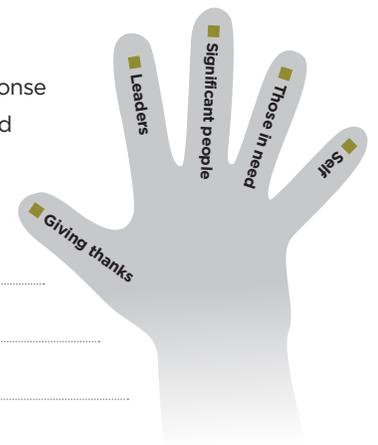
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■ Prayer

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



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¹ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (IVP, 1979), 54

July 2
Thursday
2015

Unity under the Lordship of Christ

■ Scripture

Ephesians 3:14-17

■ Observation

What is Paul asking God for in his prayer in verses 14 to 17?

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Deeper Reflection

The background of Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:1-21 is the unity of the Church (Eph 2:11-22). It is in reconciling sinners to Himself in Christ (Eph 2:1-10) that God brings about reconciliation among sinners (Eph 2:11-22) and makes them “the family God loves and the temple He lives in”² (Eph 2:19-22). Christ “Himself is our peace”, making redeemed sinners into “one new humanity...thus making peace”, reconciling them “in one body to God through the cross” (Eph 2:14-16). And “For this reason” (Eph 3:1, 14), referring to Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul prays for the Church. Paul prays for the innermost being of every member of the Church to be empowered by God’s Spirit according to the riches of His glory (v. 16). The result is “Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (v. 17a) – “the ruling presence of Christ”³. Christ dwells in our hearts “not to cheer and soothe alone but before all things else to reign.”⁴ Christ’s ruling presence in us must continue and increase. The effect of Christ’s lordship presence in us is us “being rooted and established in love” (v. 17b, NIV). Love is the ultimate key to the unity of the Church. Love will be there when Jesus is Lord of His Church.

■ Application

How is Christ’s ruling presence apparent in my own life?

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■ Prayer

Father of glory, I pray that according to Your glorious, unlimited resources You will empower every member of the body of Christ with inner strength through the Holy Spirit, so that Christ will continually and increasingly dwell in our hearts as Lord and King; and living consciously in His ruling presence, we will love one another in our diversity in unity to Your glory. Amen.



² John Stott, 114
³ John Stott, 139
⁴ John Stott, 136 – citing Handley C. G. Moule

July 3
Friday
2015

Unity in the Love of Christ

■ **Scripture**

Ephesians 3:18-21

■ **Observation**

What do you observe about the love of Christ in verses 18 to 21?

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Deeper Reflection

When the Spirit-empowered Church is filled with Christ’s ruling presence, she becomes “rooted and established in love” (Eph 3:16-17). “In the new and reconciled humanity which Christ is creating” – the Church, “love is the pre-eminent virtue”⁵. Paul likens this love to “a well-rooted tree” and “a well-built house”⁶. Then Paul prays that the Church, in this love marked by “depth as opposed to superficiality”⁷, “may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” (v. 18, NIV). Christ’s love is “broad’ enough to encompass all mankind, ‘long’ enough to last for eternity, ‘deep’ enough to reach the most degraded sinner, and ‘high’ enough to exalt Him to heaven”⁸. And “it needs the whole people of God to understand the whole love of God, all the saints together..with all their varied backgrounds and experiences”⁹. In loving unity, the Church grasps Christ’s love “which surpasses knowledge” (v. 19a), and in so doing, the Church grows towards being “filled up to all the fullness of God” (v. 19b). We need God’s power, so we must pray and practice the love of Christ.

■ **Application**

How do I appreciate and respond to the love of Christ?

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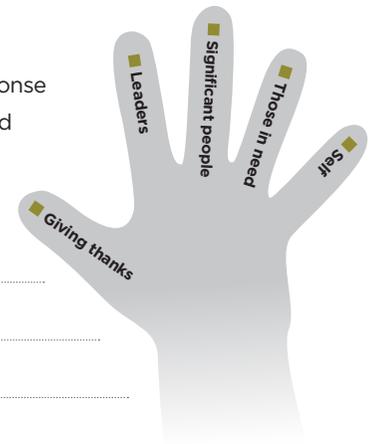
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■ **Prayer**

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



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⁵ John Stott, 136
⁶ John Stott, 136
⁷ John Stott, 136
⁸ John Stott, 137
⁹ John Stott, 137

July 4
Saturday
2015

The Church Maturing onto Trinitarian Fullness

■ **Scripture**

Ephesians 4:1-16

■ **Observation**

What does it mean “to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” according to verses 1 to 16?

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Deeper Reflection

The Church is “the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:22-23), “the Father of glory” (Eph 1:17). Paul prays for the Church that she will ultimately “be filled up to all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:19). Having prayed for the Church, Paul urges her to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (v. 1, NIV) by growing to “become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (v. 13, NIV). A vitally important key to this already-and-not-yet maturing process is to be continually “filled with the Spirit”¹⁰ (Eph 5:18). In Ephesians, the Church is to mature onto Trinitarian fullness. The goal of Christian ministry (vv. 7-12) is maturity, marked by “unity” and “love” (vv. 13, 15, 16). Maturity is “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (vv. 2-3, NRSV). Maturity essentially has to do with character and relationship, as indicated by these vital Christ-like traits. How I relate with people shows my character, and my character shapes how I relate with people. Love is both the goal of and the way to maturing in Christ.

■ **Application**

How do I see myself maturing in light of what Paul teaches about spiritual maturity in verses 1 to 16?

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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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¹⁰ The noun “fullness” and the verb “fill” belong to the same word family in Greek.

July 5
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?

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
July 2015 - Week 1

YOU CHOOSE FIRST

Choosing what God wants rather than what I want.

Scripture - Genesis 13:1-12; Matthew 6:33

1. Activity Bite

Imagine there are two delicious slices of cake to be shared between you and your friend – one bigger than the other. Will you choose the bigger one and let your friend take the smaller one? Imagine your father has two mobile phones to give to you and your sibling – one is a newer model. Will you let your sibling have the first pick?

2. Chat Time

Q1: Why is it sometimes more difficult to let the other person be the first to choose?

Q2: Is getting the best things (like the latest phone model) always good for you?

Q3: From Genesis 13, should Abraham and Lot have chosen the lands on their own or should they have asked God? What have you learned about seeking God for what is best for you?

3. Learning Point

Lot chooses the land which he thinks is best for himself. However, in the later chapters of Genesis, he gets himself into real trouble by being among the wicked people of that land. Choosing what you think is best may not be a bad thing but what would be better is to consider what God wants for you. Does He want you to bless others with the better things or take them all for yourself? Seeking God first is always the best.

4. Action Point

Think of something that you desire a lot, like the latest smartphone model. Pray and ask God if having that item will do more harm than good. Listen to your parents' advice as God will speak through them too.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for teaching me that not all things I desire will be good for me. Help me to seek You first. I want to choose Your best for me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

July 6
Monday
2015

Unexpected Commandment

■ Scripture

Genesis 22:1-2

■ Observation

What do you learn about God and discipleship in verses 1 to 2?

Deeper Reflection

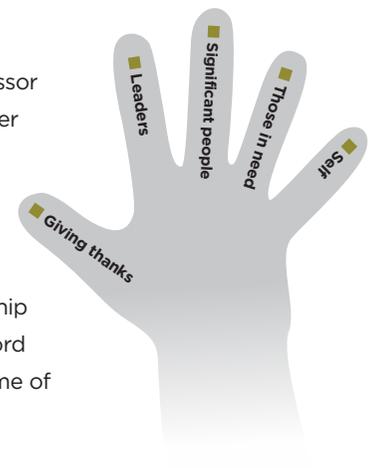
“God tested Abraham” (v. 1). As our walk with God deepens, we face greater testing of our faith from God. Abraham began his faith journey with the test of uncertainty: he obeyed God’s call “not knowing where he was going” (Heb 11:8). Then, for 25 years he underwent the test of impossibility: giving birth to God’s promised son in old age (Ge 21:1-7). And now, the test of perplexity: an unexpected divine command to offer his son as a burnt offering (v. 2). God’s will for our lives can be disorientating at times. Here are two questions for reflection. **How do we hold our “Isaacs”?** A feeling question. Isaac symbolises what we hold dearest in our lives. God knew what Isaac meant to Abraham: “your son, your only son, whom you love” (v. 2). The divine triple emphasis shows God’s understanding and appreciation of Abraham’s feelings. **How do we behold our “Isaacs”?** A faith question. Abraham must know, and so must we, that “Isaac” is first of all, God’s possession, not ours. “Isaac” is only God’s present to us. “Isaac” is for God’s purposes. It is God’s prerogative to act according to His pleasure. How we behold our “Isaacs” will determine how we hold our “Isaacs”.

■ Application

What are the “Isaacs” in my life, and how do I behold and hold them?

■ Prayer

Most High God, Creator and Possessor of everything, I struggle to surrender to You what is most precious to me. Help me to be willing to do so, for I am willing to be made willing. And even should You take it away from me, I will bow in worship and say, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”¹¹ Amen.



¹¹ Job 1:21

July 7
Tuesday
2015

Unquestioned Compliance

■ Scripture

Genesis 22:3-10

■ Observation

What do you observe about Abraham's discipleship in verses 3 to 10?

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Deeper Reflection

Abraham responded to God's unexpected commandment with unquestioned compliance in four discipleship movements. "Place" is a key word in Genesis 22, repeated four times: "the place God told him about" (vv. 2-3). **Faithfulness Movement:** Abraham "rose early in the morning" (v. 3) – prompt obedience. Taking Isaac and split wood, he "arose and went to the place God told him about" (v. 3). **Focus Movement:** What was Abraham's dominant thought during the three-day ("On the third day", v. 4) journey? The "place" to sacrifice Isaac as God told him. Abraham "raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance" (v. 4). **Forward Movement:** Abraham moved towards "the place", taking with him "the fire and the knife" with "the wood of the burnt offering laid on Isaac" (v. 6). Father and son "walked on together" (v. 6). Resoluteness in sacrifice. Along the way, Isaac asked, "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (v. 7), whereupon Abraham answered, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering" (v. 8). Then, father and son "walked on together" (v. 8). Restedness in sacrifice. **Finishing Movement:** Then "they reached the place God had told him about, and Abraham built an altar there" (v. 9).

■ Application

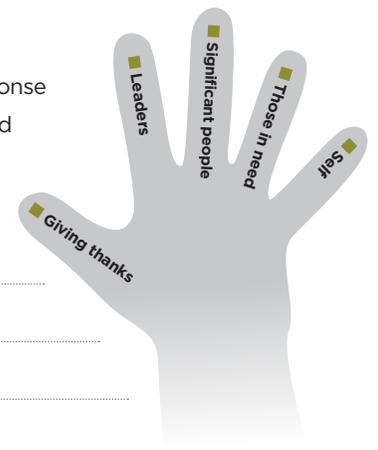
What challenges do I face in walking with God with unquestioned compliance to His Word?

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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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July 8
Wednesday
2015

Ultimate Provision

■ Scripture

Genesis 22:10-14

■ Observation

How is the divine name, *The LORD Will Provide* (Hebrew: *Yahweh-jireh*), to be understood in the context of verses 10 to 14?

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Deeper Reflection

Yahweh-jireh, the LORD Will Provide (v. 14), is a favourite name of God of many Christians – because we, almost always, associate this name with God providing our material needs. Such an understanding of God’s name here is at best narrow, at worst self-centred. We must consider the context of the divine name revealed. What led to the divine revelation? Abraham’s **submission** to God: to a command that was difficult to understand, and not easy to obey (Ge 22:1-9). Abraham’s **sacrifice** to God: “Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son” (v. 10), albeit God intervened (vv. 11-12a). Abraham’s **surrender** to God: “you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me” (v. 12b). The context of “the LORD Will Provide” is highly theocentric. God stopped Abraham from slaying his son – “your son, your only son, whom you love” (vv. 2, 12). But God, out of His love for fallen humankind, slayed “His only begotten Son”, whom He loves (Jn 3:16), to make the ultimate provision for our greatest need: “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29; Ge 22:13). On the cross, in surrender and submission to His Father, the Son of God sacrificed Himself.

■ Application

What does the divine name, “*The LORD Will Provide*,” mean to me personally?

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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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July 9
Thursday
2015

Unfailing Promises

■ Scripture

Genesis 22:13-19

■ Observation

What do you observe about the promises of God in verses 13 to 19?

Deeper Reflection

After the substitutionary sacrifice for Isaac (v. 13), God reiterated His promises to Abraham with the reassurance of fulfillment (vv. 15-18). Let us consider the promise-fulfillment principle given here. **Conditions to Promises:** The “abundant fulfillment” (“I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply you”, v. 17) “was based on Abraham’s obedience”¹² – “because [you] have not withheld your son” (v. 16) and “because you have obeyed My voice” (v. 18). God’s promises in Scripture are given with conditions. Let us not be flippant or presumptuous about God’s promises. **Confidence of Fulfillment:** In reiterating His promises, God added “By Myself I have sworn” (v. 16): “God also bound Himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that He would never change His mind” (Heb 6:17, NLT). “The reassurance of the promises was given, but only after the sacrifice of the substitute.”¹³ Paul had Genesis 22 in mind¹⁴ when he wrote that if God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, He would certainly, along with Him, give us all things (Ro 8:32). And in our imperfect faithful walk with God, God “remains faithful” (2 Ti 2:13).

■ Application

What does it mean for me to live my life by the unfailing promises of God?

■ Prayer

Faithful God, as the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is Your Word that goes out from Your mouth; it will not return to You empty, without accomplishing what You desire and Your purposes.¹⁵ I hope in Your unfailing Word. Amen.



¹² Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker, 1998, 1996), 401

¹³ Allen P. Ross, 401

¹⁴ Allen P. Ross, 402

¹⁵ Isaiah 55:10-11

July 10
Friday
2015

Unwavering Commitment

■ Scripture

Genesis 22:1-2, 5-8, 11-12, 16-19

■ Observation

What do you observe about Abraham's commitment to God in verses 1 to 2, 5 to 8, 11 to 12 and 16 to 19?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 22 marks a significant high point in Abraham's spiritual journey and maturity. The story shows five marks of Abraham's unwavering commitment to God, which reflect how deeply Abraham knew his God. **Worship to God:** "we will worship" (v. 5). "God does not ask worshipers to give Him that which they do not treasure or that which they no longer care for or need. Rather, God requires that His worshipers offer Him the best that they have."¹⁶ Remember: God has already sacrificed His best for us – His Son. **Trust in God:** Abraham was confident that he and his son will "return" (v. 5, and see v. 19), and that God would "provide for Himself the lamb" (v. 8). How God would do it, Abraham had no idea. **Fear of God** (v. 12): "The 'fear of God' entails an obedience to God's revelation of His moral will, whether through conscience or Scripture."¹⁷ **Surrender to God:** "you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (v. 12, also v. 16). The emphasis is "from Me". **Obedience to God:** "you have obeyed My voice" (v. 18). Abraham's twice "Here I am" (vv. 1, 11) shows his attentiveness and receptiveness to the Word of God (cf. 2 Pe 1:19).

■ Application

How can I develop an unwavering commitment to God 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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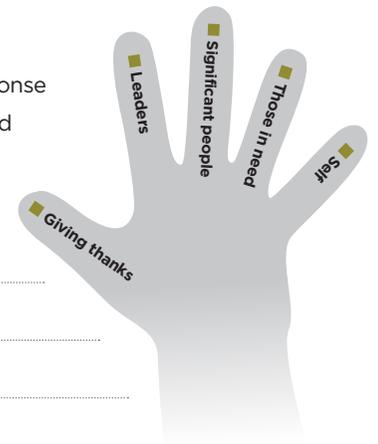
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¹⁶ Allen P. Ross, 402
¹⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, Genesis: A Commentary (Zondervan, 2001), 308

July 11
Saturday
2015

Unique Calling

■ **Scripture**

Genesis 22:20-24

■ **Observation**

What significance does the brief narrative in verses 20 to 24 have?

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Deeper Reflection

Verses 20 to 24 begin with: “Now it came about after these things [Ge 22:1-19], that it was told Abraham” (v. 20a). Abraham received some news about his brother and his wife: “Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor” (v. 20b). A key idea here is bearing children: “Milcah has borne children” (v. 20), “Milcah bore” (v. 23), Nahor’s concubine, “Reumah, also bore” (v. 24). The narrator is comparing Abraham to Nahor regarding bearing children. We need to link verses 20 to 24 back to Genesis 11:29-30: Nahor married Milcah, and Abraham married Sarai; but “Sarai was barren; she had no child”. Now Abraham had only one son – in God’s covenant purpose for him (Ge 22:2, 12, 16), but Nahor already had “eight” sons through Milcah (vv. 20-22, 23b). In fact, Nahor was already a grandfather (v. 21b), and Isaac was still unmarried. How slow things were going for Abraham! But it was God’s unique calling for Abraham. It is easy for us to compare with others, seeing that they are “better” in life than us. We need to recognise God’s unique calling upon each of us individually. Then, we celebrate in God, and not compare with others.

■ **Application**

What do I recognise as God’s unique calling for me?

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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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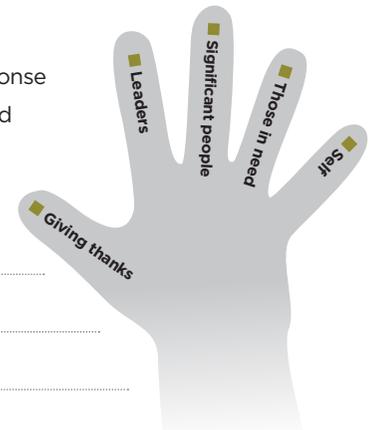
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July 12
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
July 2015 - Week 2

IT'S SO DIFFICULT

Sometimes God will ask us to do difficult things.

Scripture - Genesis 22:1-18; Romans 8:28

1. Activity Bite

Reflect on this question - what is the hardest thing for you to give up? It can be a toy, a pet, a hobby or even food. Share why it is so difficult to give it up.

2. Chat Time

Q1: What is stopping you from giving up the thing that you treasure most?

Q2: Is it easy for you to trust and obey your parents when they say, "It is for your own good"?

Q3: Will you be able to trust God fully if you know that He can't fail and whatever He does is for your good?

3. Learning Point

God knows the conditions of our hearts. He knows how much you love and trust Him, but once in a while He will test you by asking you to do something difficult. This test is not to make you fail or find fault with you, but to reveal how much you need to depend on Him. Through such times of testing you can actually grow stronger in faith with His help. He does this because He cares for you. Abraham's faith in God was tested and when proven true, God blessed him and the world through him.

4. Action Point

Romans 8:28 tells us that God can turn bad situations into something good for you. Think of a difficulty you are facing. Surrender it to God in prayer and watch how He transforms it into something good.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Thank You, Jesus, for the testing because I can grow stronger in faith. Give me Your joy and help me give thanks to You in difficult moments. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

July 14
Tuesday
2015

Beyond My Lifetime

■ Scripture

Genesis 23:1-2; Hebrews 11:11-16

■ Observation

How is Sarah's death in verses 1 to 2 linked with Hebrews 11:11-16?

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Deeper Reflection

While lying on her deathbed, Sarah might have felt that something was incomplete in her life. How she must have wished to see her son, Isaac, married and meet her grandchildren. This feeling of being incomplete was perhaps made more pronounced when she thought of Nahor and his wife having eight sons and who were already grandparents (Ge 22:20-24). She might have asked, "If God has promised me and Abraham numerous descendants, why didn't He give me a chance to see my grandchildren?" God Almighty could have (cf. Ge 17:1), but He didn't. Here we learn something about God. God has said, "My righteous one shall live by faith" (Heb 10:38). Part of this is "you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Heb 10:36). However, "live by faith" includes "died in faith" and "without receiving the promises" (Heb 11:13). The "died in faith" refers to the patriarchs, and particularly to Sarah (Heb 11:11-12). God's purposes for each of our lives are fulfilled not just in our lifetime, but also beyond our lifetime. So also are God's promises and our prayers. This is why God revealed Himself to Abraham as "the Everlasting God" (Ge 21:33).

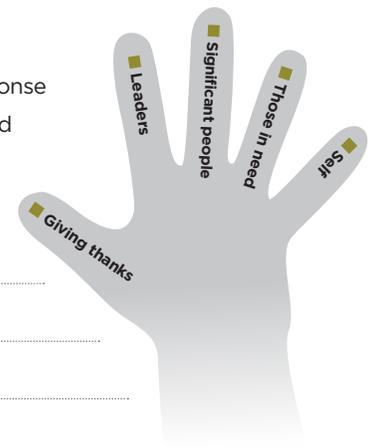
■ Application

What does it mean to me personally that there is a possibility of God fulfilling His purposes for my life beyond my lifetime?

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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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July 15
Wednesday
2015

Relating with the World

■ Scripture

Genesis 23:3-9

■ Observation

What do you observe about Abraham's posture when he approached the Hittites to buy a burial site to bury Sarah in verses 3 to 9?

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Deeper Reflection

God called Abraham to be a blessing to the nations (Ge 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). With this mind, Abraham's negotiation with the Hittites in purchasing a burial site for Sarah in Genesis 23 offers an example upon which we can reflect on how we ourselves relate with the world. **Honoured by the world:** The Hittites viewed Abraham as "a mighty prince" (v. 6), or "a prince of God" (ESV, NJB), in their midst. Abraham, a landless alien (v. 4), "put himself at the bottom of the social ladder, and they put him at the top"²⁰. However, in biblical discipleship, Jesus' followers may be dishonoured for His name's sake (Mt 5:10-11). **Humble before the world:** Abraham "rose and bowed to the people of the land" (v. 7, also v. 12). It was an expression of "polite humility"²¹ – "an exceptional action for one who has just been addressed as 'mighty prince.' His bow signifies gratitude and dependence on their favour."²² **Honourable before the world:** "Give me the cave...for the full price" (v. 9). "Although God had promised him the land, he would not be unjust to the existing owner."²³ We are to live honourably in the ways of the world: "Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; revenue to whom revenue; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Ro 13:7).

■ Application

How will I relate with the world around me in humble and honourable ways?

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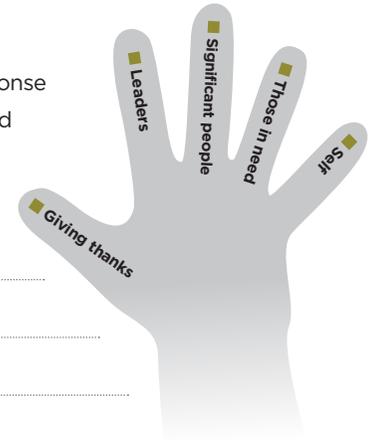
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■ Prayer

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



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²⁰ E. F. Roop, *Genesis* (Herald, 1987), 154
²¹ Allen P. Ross, 409
²² Bruce K. Waltke, 318
²³ W. H. Griffith Thomas, 50

July 16
Thursday
2015

No Turning Back

■ Scripture

Genesis 23:1-20

■ Observation

How many times is the burial of Sarah referred to in Genesis 23 and what is its significance in the story?

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Deeper Reflection

The verb “bury” and the noun “burial site” are altogether repeated 13 times in Genesis 23. When Sarah died, Abraham sought to do two things: to bury Sarah in Canaan, and to buy a burial site there. Genesis 23 begins with “Sarah died...in the land of Canaan” (v. 2), which led to Abraham burying her there, and ends with “Abraham buried Sarah...in the land of Canaan” (v. 19) after he had bought the burial site. What Abraham did was significant because “burial was usually in one’s native land”²⁴, but now, he had made Canaan his “ancestral home”²⁵. There would be “no going back to Haran”²⁶. The Hittites were willing to give Abraham the “choicest” tomb (v. 6), but Abraham wanted “to purchase a permanent site for his descendants to anchor their identification with the Promised Land”²⁷. The cave in the field of Machpelah (vv. 9, 17, 19) would be the burial site of Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah, Leah and Jacob (Ge 49:29-32). “No turning back” in following Jesus is a decisive act. But the harder one is the daily “no turning back”. For just like Abraham, we always “have the opportunity to return” to our Haran (Heb 11:15).

■ Application

What can possibly keep me from having a “no turning back” spirit in following Jesus?

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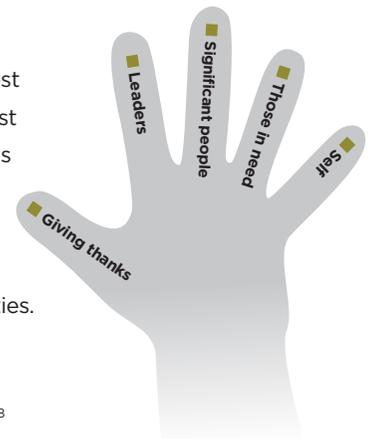
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■ Prayer

Lord, I know that I am not at my best when I am most exuberant and most impetuous, but I am trying to pull as steadily and bravely as I can in the direction You have sent me. Stay with me when I am swamped by weariness and seeming impossibilities. Turn my face gently towards You, keep my heart loving and my will determined to fight on to the end.²⁸



²⁴ Allen P. Ross, 411

²⁵ Allen P. Ross, 411

²⁶ Allen P. Ross, 411

²⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 316

²⁸ Based on a meditation by Mother Janet Stuart (1857-1914), Angela Ashwin, *The Book of A Thousand Prayers* (Zondervan, 1996, 2002), 100-101

July 17
Friday
2015

Paying a Price

■ Scripture

Genesis 23:8-16

■ Observation

What is the significance of Abraham paying a very high price (four hundred shekels of silver, or about 4.6 kilograms, v. 15) to purchase a burial site in Canaan?

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Deeper Reflection

Abraham paid “the full price” (Ge 23:9) “for an irrevocable sale”²⁹ of the burial site for Sarah. “Four hundred shekels of silver” (v. 14) was “about 4.6 kilograms”³⁰. It was “beyond a fair price”³¹, and “seems high when compared with David’s purchase of the temple site for fifty shekels (2 Sa 24:24).”³² But there is never too great a price to pay to follow Jesus. In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about “cheap grace” and “costly grace”. We must first recognise costly grace. Grace is what God has done for us and given to us – something that we do not deserve at all. Grace “is **costly** because it cost God the life of His Son: ‘you were bought at a price’³³, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is **grace** because God did not reckon His Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him for us”³⁴. We are redeemed to follow Jesus: this itself is grace. Discipleship is grace, because it is redemptive. But we can live our redeemed life treating costly grace as cheap grace. “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.”³⁵

■ Application

What does it mean to me personally to pay a price to follow Jesus?

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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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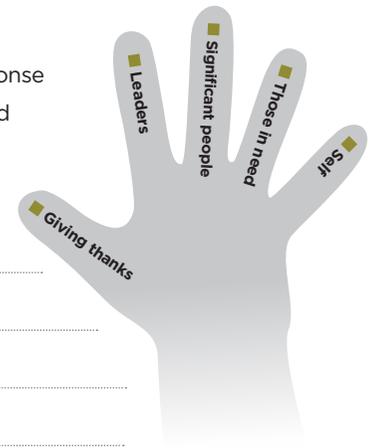
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²⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 319

³⁰ Genesis 23:15 (NIV, footnote)

³¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 321

³² Bruce K. Waltke, 320

³³ 1 Corinthians 6:20

³⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, 1995), 45

³⁵ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 45

July 18
Saturday
2015

“Sojourners with Me”

■ Scripture

Genesis 23:1-4, 17-20; Leviticus 25:23

■ Observation

What does being “a stranger and a sojourner” in the Promised Land mean (vv. 1-4, 17-20; Lev 25:23)?

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Deeper Reflection

Abraham was “a stranger and a sojourner” in the Promised Land (Ge 23:4), a “resident alien” who owned “no land and ordinarily is not entitled to buy land”³⁶. Thus, Abraham, humbly seeking the Hittites’ favour, bought a burial site to bury Sarah. The burial site was not for residence, but for rooting in God’s purposes and promises. Purchasing and possessing the burial site (vv. 17-20) was a demonstration of commitment to God’s purposes and confidence in God’s promises. Abraham would remain “a stranger and a sojourner” in the Promised Land, “looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb 11:9-10), “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22). God said to Israel, poised to possess the Promised Land: “the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me” (Lev 25:23). When ruling Israel, David acknowledged before God: “we are sojourners before You, and tenants, as all our fathers are” (1 Ch 29:15). And now, we are to live as “aliens and strangers” on earth (1 Pe 1:1, 17; 2:11), looking at life and living life with eschatological and eternal perspectives (2 Co 4:16-18), going easy on earthly things that are passing away (1 Co 7:29-31).

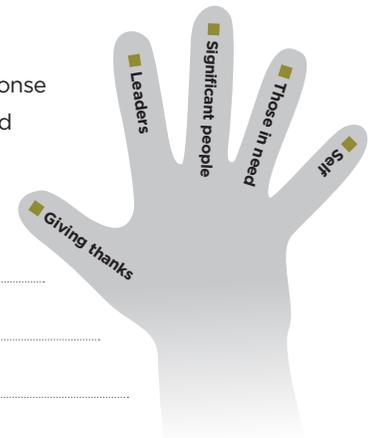
■ Application

How am I to live as a stranger and sojourner on this earth?

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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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³⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 317

July 19
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
July 2015 - Week 3**

EVERY GOOD GIFT

Why can't I have everything I want?

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

1. Activity Bite

Imagine that your birthday is coming. Make a list of all the birthday presents that you would like your parents to buy for you. Show the list to your parents and ask if they will buy everything on it.

2. Chat Time

- Q1:** Which items did your parents refuse to buy for you?
- Q2:** Ask your parents to give reasons for not buying them. Are you able to accept their explanations? If no, why?
- Q3:** What would you let a baby drink - a bottle of gassy cola or milk? Explain your answer.

3. Learning Point

The world is filled with many exciting toys and things to enjoy but not all things are good for you even though they are not meant for evil. There is nothing evil about playing computer games or watching TV but if you do these for too many hours without stopping, they will affect your studies, your rest or your eyesight. Then it becomes unhealthy and your parents will limit how much you enjoy them. God knows a lot more about what is good or bad for you. Thus it is good to trust Him rather than complain about the things you can't have.

4. Action Point

Make a list of good things you already have - comics, school books, past birthday toys, a nice bed and more - and thank God for every one of them as they are good gifts from Him.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)
Dear God, I am sorry for complaining about the things I can't have. Instead, I want to thank You for the things I already have because they are good gifts from You. Amen.

July 20
Monday
2015

God Will Guide

■ Scripture

Genesis 24:1-67

■ Observation

What are the recurring words and ideas in Genesis 24 that show the motif of divine guidance in the story?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 24 may be summarised as: God guided Abraham's servant to succeed in getting a bride for Isaac so as to fulfil His covenant with Abraham. The idea of divine guidance is shaped by four Hebrew key words, with God as the subject, repeated nine times altogether: "success" (v. 12), "appointed" (vv. 14, 44), "successful" or "prospered" (vv. 21, 40, 42, 56) and "guided" (vv. 27, 48). The "romantic tale"³⁷ is told in four progressive settings. Assignment (vv. 1-9): Abraham assigned his servant to take a wife for Isaac. Appointment (vv. 10-27): God guided the servant to the woman He had "appointed" for Isaac (v. 14). Affirmation (vv. 28-61): Rebekah's family affirmed that "the matter comes from the LORD" (v. 50). Accomplishment (vv. 62-67): Rebekah became Isaac's wife. The story "gives living form to the charge 'In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths' (Pr 3:5-6)"³⁸. God will guide us, if we want Him to. But ironically, oftentimes there is a fear in us when we seek God's guidance: What if God leads me to something I don't like? The root problem here is we do not know God. When we know God, we can trust Him when He leads us in such a manner.

■ Application

How would I respond if God leads me to something I don't like?

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■ Prayer

Lord, You lead me by ways I do not know, through joy and sorrow, through victory and defeat, beyond my understanding. Give me faith to see Your guiding hand in all things; that being neither lifted up by seeming success, nor cast down by seeming failure, I may press forward wherever You lead, to the glory of Your name.³⁹ Amen.



³⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 323

³⁷ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1976), 146

³⁷ Adapted from a prayer of Eric Milner-White (1884-1963) and G. W. Briggs (1875-1959)

July 21
Tuesday
2015

Know Your God

■ Scripture

Genesis 24:1-9, 33-41

■ Observation

What do you observe about Abraham and his God in verses 1 to 9 and 33 to 41?

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Deeper Reflection

Verses 1 to 9 and 33 to 41 portray an aged godly man who knew his God deeply. **Abraham's closeness to God:** This is reflected in God "has greatly blessed" (v. 35) Abraham "in every way" (v. 1). It was in knowing God personally as "the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth" that Abraham sent his servant to get a bride for Isaac (v. 3). **Abraham's commitment to God:** "The LORD before whom I have walked" (v. 40). Abraham lived his life by God's call and by God's Word: "The LORD...who took me...who spoke to me...swore to me" (v. 7). **Abraham's choices before God:** Abraham single-mindedly aligned his life to God's purposes with regard to the land (Genesis 23) and the seed (Genesis 24). He made it very clear to his servant that the mate must not be from Canaan (vv. 3-4) and the marriage must be in Canaan (vv. 5-8). To Abraham, marriage must serve God's purposes (v. 7). The matter was serious enough for Abraham to make his servant swear to ensure that he did as instructed (vv. 2, 9). **Abraham's confidence in God:** "He will send His angel before you" (v. 7) "to make your journey successful" (v. 40). Is how you live determined by knowing God?

■ Application

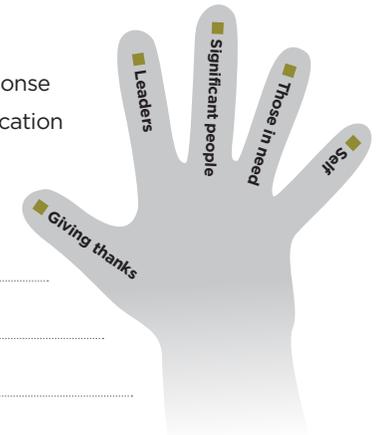
To what extent is the way I live my life determined by knowing God?

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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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July 22
Wednesday
2015

The Covenant God

■ Scripture

Genesis 24:12, 27, 42, 48

■ Observation

What do you observe about Abraham and his God in Abraham's servant's words in verses 12, 27, 42 and 48?

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Deeper Reflection

The expression “the LORD, the God of my master Abraham” is repeated four times in Abraham's servant's speech (vv. 12, 27, 42, 48). It stresses God's covenant with Abraham in covenant relationship and under covenant lordship. Covenant lordship is at the heart of covenant relationship. Fundamental in covenant relationship is mutual covenant loyalty. On God's part, His covenant loyalty is His “steadfast love” – repeated three times in Genesis 24 (vv. 12, 14, 27). The Hebrew word for “steadfast love” “entails loyalty to a covenant relationship. The inferior partner depends on the kindness of the superior to meet desperate need. God's reliable kindness to His needy people is the basis of the covenant relationship.”⁴⁰ God “in overflowing anger” forsook His people for their covenant unfaithfulness, hiding His face from them – but only “for a brief moment” (Isa 54:7-8a). With “everlasting steadfast love”, God “will have compassion” on them (Isa 54:8b), because “the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and My covenant of peace shall not be removed” (Isa 54:10, ESV). This is our covenant God who has redeemed us through “My blood of the covenant” (Mk 14:24; Eph 1:7).

■ Application

How do I relate with God as the covenant God?

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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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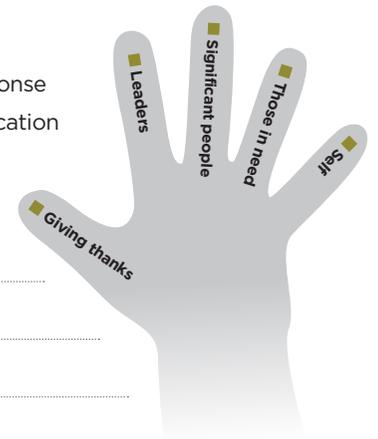
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⁴⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, 328

July 23
Thursday
2015

Seeking God's Guidance (1)

■ Scripture

Genesis 24:10-14, 42-44

■ Observation

How did Abraham's servant seek God's guidance in his mission (vv. 10-14, 42-44)?

Deeper Reflection

Genesis 24 presents a model for seeking God's guidance. We begin with **principles**: the fundamentals in our relationship with God given in Scripture. For Abraham, it was God's call and God's Word to him (v. 7) which determined that in looking for a bride for Isaac, the mate must not be from Canaan, but the marriage must be in Canaan (vv. 3-6). Acting on this principle, Abraham was confident that God would guide his servant (v. 7b). Divine guidance began when "he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor" (v. 10; see v. 4) and reached "the well of water at evening, the time when women go out to draw water" (v. 11). Next is **prayer**. The servant's prayer was anchored in God's covenant with Abraham – a fundamental: "O LORD, God of my master Abraham...show steadfast love to my master" (v. 12, ESV). He asked God for a sign: the girl he would ask a drink from would not just offer him a drink but water his camels as well (vv. 13-14). The servant was very intentional in asking God for this specific sign. It was to be "a shrewd character test"⁴¹. The bride for Isaac must be a woman of virtue.

■ Application

How do I go about seeking God's guidance in my life?

■ Prayer

Jesus my Teacher, guide me along Your way, and help me to piece together the jigsaw of life in Your kingdom. When I make decisions, lead me to the heart of the matter, and when I face conflict, do not let my own panic drown out the still, small voice of Your wisdom.⁴² Amen.



⁴¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 328 – citing N. Steinberg

⁴² Angela Ashwin, 63

July 24
Friday
2015

Seeking God's Guidance (2)

■ Scripture

Genesis 24:15-27, 45-52

■ Observation

How did God guide Abraham's servant in his mission of getting a bride for Isaac in verses 15 to 27 and 45 to 52?

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Deeper Reflection

God answered Abraham's servant's prayer even "before he had finished speaking" to Him: "It came about...behold, Rebekah...came out" (v. 15). It wasn't coincidence. It was providence. "Timing is crucial in **providence**."⁴³ God's providence "includes the ordinary and the extraordinary"⁴⁴. In this case, it was the ordinary. Rebekah fit the sign the servant had asked from God (vv. 17-21). "Hospitality is the determinant, over and above beauty and virginity (v. 16)."⁴⁵ Since each camel could drink 95 litres of water, "the servant is sagacious; it is a test of the woman's kindness, hospitality, industry and willingness to help a stranger"⁴⁶. It was "a stiff test...since it would require far more than common civility to volunteer to water 'ten' thirsty camels"⁴⁷ – 950 litres of water! Imagine how many trips to and from the well Rebekah had to make! The servant discerned it was God's leading when he learned that Rebekah was Bethuel's daughter – Abraham's grandniece (vv. 22-27; see v. 4). When the servant reported to Rebekah's family how God had guided him to Rebekah, they affirmed that the matter came "from the LORD" (v. 50). In providence God "has spoken" (v. 51).

■ Application

What has my experience of divine providence in my life been like?

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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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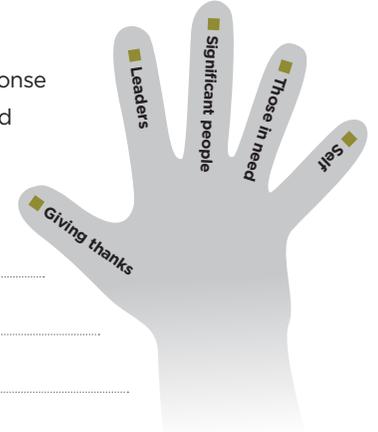
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⁴³ Bruce K. Waltke, 328
⁴⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 328
⁴⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, 328
⁴⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 328
⁴⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 328 – citing N. Steinberg

July 25
Saturday
2015

The Sovereignty-Responsibility Tension

■ Scripture

Genesis 24:7-8, 40-41, 48-61

■ Observation

What do you observe about the human elements involved in God guiding Abraham's servant in his mission in verses 7 to 8, 40 to 41 and 48 to 61?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 24 shows the tension between divine direction (sovereignty) and human decision (responsibility): Abraham's certainty of God making his servant's journey successful and the possibility of "failure". "He will send His angel before you" (v. 7) is followed immediately by "But if the woman is not willing to follow you" (v. 8; see also verses 40-41). There was an openness to Rebekah's family's decision to let her leave their homeland to go to a land far, far away: "So now if you are going to...and if not..." (v. 49), the possibility of "if they do not give her to you" (v. 41). And there was also a place for consulting Rebekah's wishes: "Will you go with this man?" (vv. 57-58). D. A. Carson said: "The sovereignty-responsibility tension is almost impossibly broad⁴⁸... The sovereignty-responsibility tension is not a problem to be solved; rather, it is a framework to be explored.⁴⁹" In practical outworking, our human decision must be anchored on our commitment to God; and then, we have confidence in the divine direction according to His sovereign wisdom and freedom. In Genesis 24, providence (vv. 15-25) is enveloped by prayer (vv. 12-14) and praise (vv. 26-27).

■ Application

How do I live in the tension of divine sovereignty and human responsibility?

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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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⁴⁸ D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty & Human Responsibility* (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1994), 1
⁴⁹ D. A. Carson, 2

July 26
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

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

What gave me life and what drained me?

How was the Spirit of God at work?

REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
July 2015 - Week 4
JUST DO IT?

When others do wrong, I won't.

Scripture - Genesis 3:10-13

1. Activity Bite

Place some grapes or longans (or any small fruits) on a plate. Randomly choose one. Take a good look and try to recognise every feature on it. After that, put it back with the other fruits and mix them up. Now try to identify the one you picked.

2. Chat Time

Q1: How are you different from your classmates in terms of personality?

Q2: Have you ever felt left out by your friends just because you didn't join them in doing wrong things?

Q3: What makes you different from others when it comes to doing what is right or wrong?

3. Learning Point

You might have heard your friends say, "Never mind. Let's do it! No one will know." Deep in your heart you know it's wrong but maybe you ended up doing it because you didn't want your friends to say that you were weird. Often, choosing to be different can be difficult. Adam could have said "no" but he gave in to the temptation when the serpent said, "It's okay. It's just one bite!" The consequences were horrifying - sin came into the world. When you say "no" to sin, you are standing up for what is right and this honours God.

4. Action Point

Do a roleplay with a friend. Have him or her tell you to do something that is not right (for example, lying about spending your pocket money on toys instead of food). Reply by saying, "No, I will not _____."

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, thank You for teaching me about doing what is right. Help me to stand up for the truth every time and not give in to temptation. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

July 27
Monday
2015

God is Faithful: Father of Many Nations

■ Scripture

Genesis 25:1-4

■ Observation

What is the significance of verses 1 to 4 in light of Genesis 17:4-5?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 25:1-11 “may best be used as a summary for the Abraham narratives”⁵⁰. The theological theme here is: **God is faithful**. Abraham “took another wife⁵¹...Keturah” (v. 1) “after the death of Sarah”⁵² (Genesis 23; 24:67). Verses 1 to 4 portray “a complete rejuvenation of the old man of the previous narratives”⁵³, blessed with many offspring: 16 descendants of sons, grandsons and great-grandsons, out of which nations were formed. Abraham fathered these sons after 140 years of age. Here we see God’s faithfulness in fulfilling His promise to Abraham: “I will make you the father of a multitude of nations” (Ge 17:4-5). “The picture of Abraham as the father of nations is thus enlarged and defined.”⁵⁴ God’s faithfulness is shown with His sovereign freedom. “For the first time Abraham had more than one child by the same wife or the same surrogate wife. Fertility, one of God’s choicest blessings to His own, is minimally manifested with Sarah and Hagar, but maximally manifested in the life and womb of the relatively obscure Keturah.”⁵⁵ Who, what and how God blesses is His to decide.

■ Application

What is the track record of God’s faithfulness in my life?

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■ Prayer

It is good to give You thanks, O Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High! In the morning, I bless Your Name for Your unfailing love; and at night, Your faithfulness that endures forever. How great are Your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep. You are my Rock, O upright God, in whom there is no unrighteousness.⁵⁶ Amen.



⁵⁰ Allen P. Ross, 425

⁵¹ Gordon J. Wenham’s translation: “Abraham married again,” Genesis 16-50, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1994), Vol. 2, 155

⁵² John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1990), Vol. 2, 179; Allen P. Ross, 426

⁵³ John H. Sailhamer, Vol. 179

⁵⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, *The Message of Genesis 12-50, The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP, 1986), 103

⁵⁵ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Eerdmans, 1995), 165

⁵⁶ Psalm 92:1-2, 5, 15

July 28
Tuesday
2015

God is Faithful: Alignment to God's Purposes

■ Scripture

Genesis 25:5-6

■ Observation

Why did Abraham do what he did in verses 5 to 6, in the context of Genesis?

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Deeper Reflection

Before his death, Abraham “gave all that he had to Isaac; but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts...and sent them away from his son Isaac” (vv. 5-6). Every act of Abraham was done in alignment to God’s purposes: “through Isaac your descendants shall be named” (Ge 21:12) towards “through your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Ge 22:18, NIV). Living in alignment to God’s purposes involves the present and the future.

Present: What I must do. Sending away his other sons might not have been easy for Abraham, as seen in his great distress in sending away Ishmael and his mother (Ge 21:10-11). But now, he did what he had to do to “secure Isaac’s inheritance in the land”⁵⁷. Living in alignment to God’s purposes may mean making hard decisions and taking difficult actions, which may have implications on our future.

Future: God will take care. “In God’s plan, these sons were sent away that there might be a true home, in the end, to return to”⁵⁸. Long after Abraham’s death, God spoke to Israel in exile: “Nations will come to your light” (Isa 60:3), which include “Midian and Ephah” and “Sheba” (Isa 60:6 with Ge 25:3, 4). We don’t know our future. But the faithful God holds our future.

■ Application

What does it mean for me to live my life in alignment with God’s purposes?

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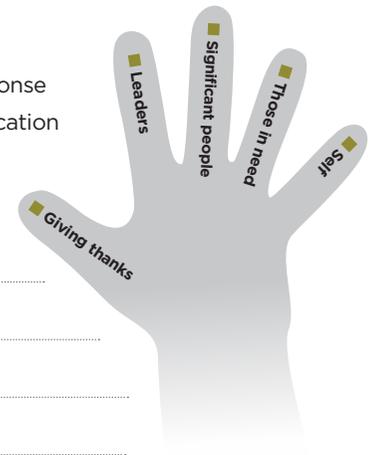
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■ Prayer

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



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⁵⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 338
⁵⁸ Derek Kidner, 150

July 29
Wednesday
2015

God is Faithful: “Died In...Old Age”

■ Scripture

Genesis 25:7 with Genesis 15:15

■ Observation

What do you observe about God when you compare verse 7 with Genesis 15:15?

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Deeper Reflection

Abraham lived 175 years (v. 7). The faithful God kept His promise: “you shall be buried at...old age” (Ge 15:15). Abraham lived 100 years in the Promised Land (see Ge 12:4). He was 100 when Isaac was born, and Isaac was 60 when Esau and Jacob were born (Ge 25:26); thus, Abraham lived to see his grandsons for 15 years. However, Sarah was not given this privilege. She did not even live to see her son get married (Ge 24:67). Longevity is a gift, not a goal, of God for His people. God’s people died in manifold ways. Perhaps, the ideal is to die in old age. The great prophet Elisha “had been suffering from the illness from which he died” (2 Ki 13:14, NIV). When John the Baptist had completed his mission as the Messiah’s forerunner, he was thrown into prison, “wasting away” his remaining days (Mk 1:14), and only to be beheaded because of a wicked woman who disliked him (Mk 6:17-28). The Son of God died an unjust brutal death in His early thirties. What is most important is this: however long we will live, in whatever way we will die, God is still the same faithful God whom, by His grace, we follow faithfully until death (Rev 2:10).

■ Application

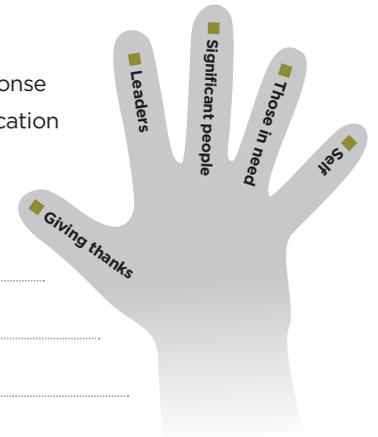
How do I view my own death?

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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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July 30
Thursday
2015

God is Faithful: Die A Good Death

■ Scripture

Genesis 25:8-10

■ Observation

What does it mean that Abraham died at a “good” old age in verse 8?

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Deeper Reflection

Abraham “died at a good old age” (v. 8, NIV). The word to focus on is “good” – also translated as “satisfied” (NASB) or “full of years” (ESV). It means that when Abraham died, he had “enjoyed both abundant quantity and quality of life”⁵⁹ with “a good conscience and a serene and tranquil mind”⁶⁰. Here we see again God’s faithfulness in keeping His promise to Abraham: “you shall be buried at a good old age” (Ge 15:15). The three pairs of contrasting key terms in Genesis – blessing and curse, good and evil, life and death – are given a redemptive twist in Abraham’s death. Death is the result of sin (Ge 2:17; cf. Ro 6:23). But Abraham’s death was associated with “good”, not evil. And the “life” that he “lived” was a full 175 years. And when Abraham was “old and advance in age” facing imminent death, “the LORD had blessed Abraham in everything” (Ge 24:1). Abraham died with “good” and “blessing” from God. Ecclesiastes 12:1 describes old age as “the evil days” or “the days of troubles” (NIV). However, Abraham’s “good” death “shows that this truth can be qualified”⁶¹. In Christ, we can die a good death, and “to die is gain” (Php 1:21).

■ Application

What does it mean for me to die a good death when I die?

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■ Prayer

Lord, fill me with the knowledge of Your will through all the wisdom and understanding Your Spirit gives, so that I may live a life worthy of You and please You in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing to know You more, being strengthened with all power according to Your glorious might so that I may have great endurance and patience, giving You thanks joyfully.⁶² Amen.



⁵⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 340

⁶⁰ D. Stuart Briscoe, *Genesis, The Preacher's Commentary* (Nelson, 1987), 205 – citing John Calvin

⁶¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 341

⁶² Colossians 1:9-12

July 31
Friday
2015

God is Faithful: Human Discontinuity, Divine Continuity

■ **Scripture**

Genesis 25:11

■ **Observation**

What does verse 11 tell us about God and human death?

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Deeper Reflection

“After the death of Abraham...God blessed his son Isaac” (v. 11). These words underscore an important theological point: divine continuity in human discontinuity – “God’s continued presence with the next generation.”⁶³ “The death of Abraham made no difference to the faithfulness of God to His promises.”⁶⁴ The work of God to bless the world continues from generation to generation as “God blessed his son Isaac” indicates. “No one is indispensable in God’s programme. Good people die, others take up the task to continue God’s programme.”⁶⁵ Joshua died without a successor to lead Israel to continue possessing the Promised Land (Jdg 1:1 contrasts Jos 1:1). He left behind an Israel ruled by judges for about 350 years in a state of “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Jdg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). But it was “in the days when the judges governed” (Ru 1:1) that God slowly and silently began the process of raising up a man after His own heart to be king of Israel: David (Ru 4:18-22; 1 Sa 13:14). The Everlasting God (Ge 21:33) “has the last word”⁶⁶.

■ **Application**

How does the theology of divine continuity in human discontinuity, as shown in verse 11, shape how I look at and live 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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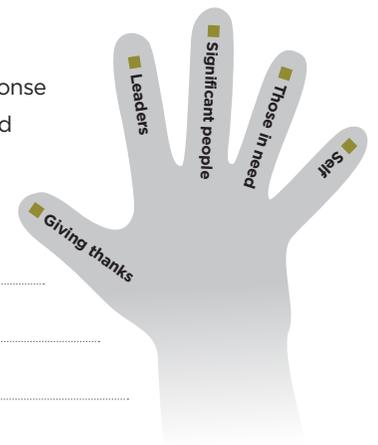
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⁶³ Bruce K. Waltke, 340
⁶⁴ W. H. Griffith Thomas, 52
⁶⁵ Allen P. Ross, 426
⁶⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 341

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