



sixty-six books. one story.
all about one name.

Jan. 8th - Jan. 14th

WEEK 2

The Covenant with Abraham | Genesis 12-50

Last week's reading took us through Genesis 1-11...what we call the preface to the rest of the story of God. We read about the creation of the world, the first people God created, and their sinful rebellion that led to the spiral of brokenness and corruption which eventually tarnished the entirety of God's once good creation. This opening picture of a good world that is tragically rotting because of the introduction of sin is what frames the story from here on out. Sin corrupts the world so deeply that God, in order to preserve good, decides to wipe out almost all of humanity. The preserved family of Noah however goes right back to how things were before the flood. The downward spiral continues, leading to the Tower of Babel story illustrating total corruption where humanity in their wickedness tries to build a tower to usurp God.

All of this forms an incredible dramatic moment. Essentially, the conflict and suspense builds throughout Genesis 1 - 11, leading the reader to wonder how the conflict will be resolved. The beginning of Genesis forces an attentive reader to ask, "How will the world be made right and good again?" And then all of a sudden chapter 12 presents an abrupt pivot; a beginning to the resolution narrative. It opens with, "Now the Lord said to Abram..." In other words, the answer to that question is, this is how: God Calls Abram and tells him, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those that bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." God makes Abram, who will later be called Abraham, the point person of a great promise of restoration that will drive the whole rest of the Bible forward. The promise goes from Abraham to Isaac, to his grandson Jacob, and then to his 12 great-grandsons who form the nation of Israel.

So Genesis is a story of beginnings, but not just about all of creation. The creation poems of Genesis 1 & 2 and the illustrations of humanity's corruption in Genesis 3 - 11 together serve as a prologue to the beginning of a very specific story: The story of God's grand effort to restore and renew the world through a specific people who will eventually be called Israel. The rest of Genesis is an origin story about how Israel came into existence and the very important narrative of the beginning of God's great redemption plan.

Group Resources

Read: Genesis 12:1-9 & 15:1-21, 26:1-5, 35:9-12*

Video: [Genesis 12 - 50](#)

Sermon: Rescue from the Darkness Beyond | War of the Worlds

Proposed Group Agenda (2 hrs)

Fellowship/Connection Time (30 min.)

Welcome & Opening Prayer (5 min.)

Warm Up (10 min.)

Video (15 min.)

Dig In (45 min.)

Grow (10 min.)

Closing Prayer (5 min.)

* The individual reading plan for this week covers Genesis 25 - 45 and Psalms 8-14.

GROUP DISCUSSION



Warm Up

Discussion Ground Rules (Read aloud)

VCC's small groups are not meant to be only bible studies or places for theological debate. Mainly, they are safe spaces where people from every part of the faith spectrum can gather and practice living out 1 Peter 3:8 (take a moment to read it), and learn what it is to be part of the family of God. This means learning to live together in unity, sympathy, love, empathy and compassion.

With this in mind, discussion should be open and without judgment. We never want to belittle or degrade another person's experience or questioning. We welcome people in the love and grace of Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to move on each person's heart. If you feel strongly opinionated about a subject or statement, approach the conversation with humility and grace - always ready to admit that you might be just a little bit wrong. Remember, it's God's kindness that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4).

Regardless of how long you have been walking with Christ, remember that none of us are experts on God and His ways. Throughout Scripture God is referred to, and even refers to Himself, as a mystery. So seek to understand before being understood. Don't assume you have everything about God or Scripture or miracles figured out. Avoid responding to one another by giving advice. Allow room for the Holy Spirit and for learning and growing together. And above all, have faith that the Holy Spirit is always at work in your group and its members.

If at any point, this week or in the future, someone breaks these ground rules, speak up and address it as a group.

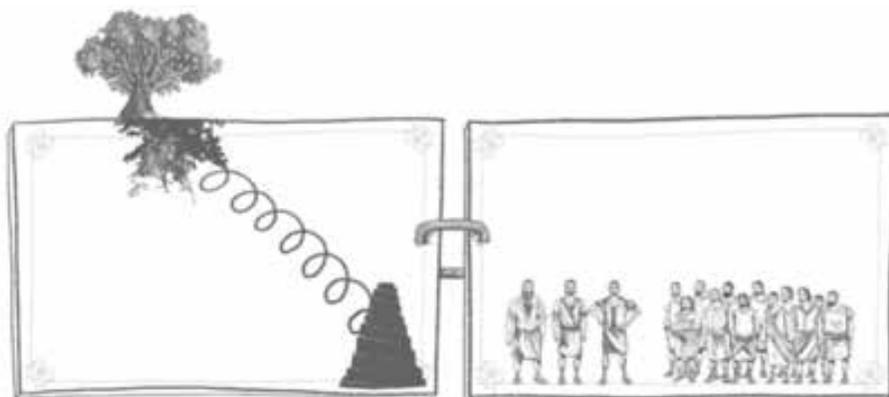
Opening Question

Share in one minute or less what you need in a group setting to feel safe?



Dig In

Q. God made it his mission to restore the world back to the early times of the Garden even after the corruption of mankind had reached it's height - culminating in the brazen plan to usurp God with the Tower of Babel. He chose Abraham and his offspring as the conduit of that restoration. The redemptive plan begins with a man who slept with his wife's servant and gave his wife away twice to other men to save his own life. The plan continues to move forward through his grandson Jacob, who stole his brother's inheritance by deceiving him and his father, and through Jacob's cruel sons who sold their own little brother into slavery and lied to their father about it. In light of all this, how is God's redemptive plan going at this point in the story?



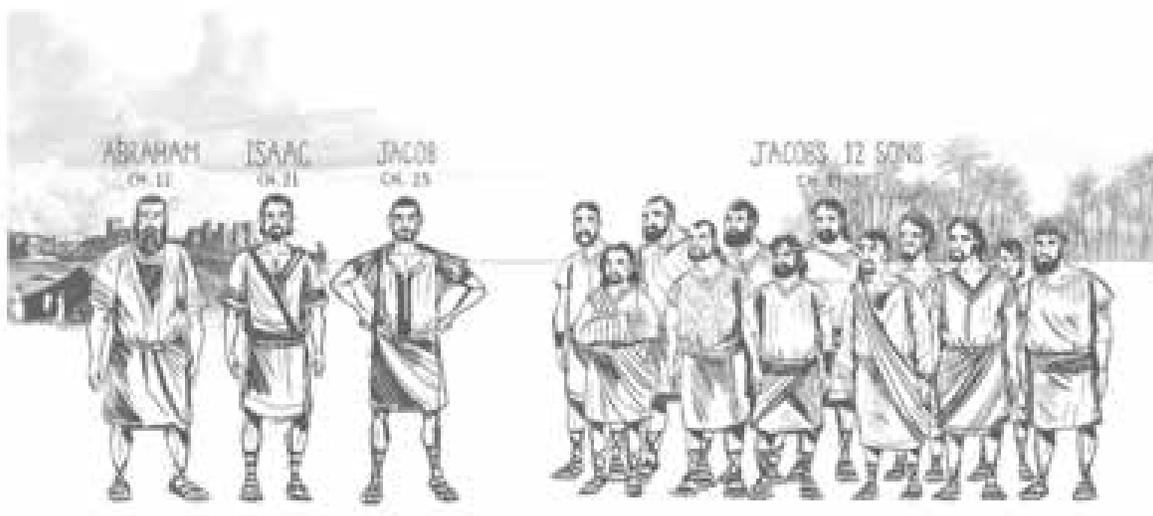
Q. Why would God choose such a man? What are two highlight moments of Abraham's story? How is he offered as a positive example in these chapters (see Genesis 15 & 22)? In which chapter does God choose Abraham to be the conduit of his redemptive plan (see Genesis 12 - Notice the covenant was made BEFORE Abraham's acts of righteousness)? What does that say about the character of God and His relationship with mankind?

Let's trace the dominant storyline of God making a covenant with Abraham and his family through the book of Genesis:

Genesis 12:1-9 & 15:1-21 | This is God re-entering the story of the fallen world and proposing a resolution. Through his partnership - with Abraham and his wife and future family - God makes a promise to restore the world. He establishes that partnership with a covenant.

Genesis 26:1-5 | This is God carrying his grand plan and promise forward to Abraham's long-awaited son, Isaac. The promise is repeated and the covenant is renewed with the next generation.

Genesis 35:9-12 | This is yet another reiteration of the grand plan and promise, now with Abraham's grandson Jacob. God then changes his name to Israel, meaning "wrestles with God," and gives him the same directions. Israel goes on to have a huge family with 12 sons who later become the 12 tribes of Israel. This is the story of how Israel comes into existence. They will be God's partner from here on out. Genesis 1 - 11 begs the question, "How will the world ever be set right?" The story that immediately unfolds from chapter 12 on essentially answers with, "Israel will prevail with God."



Q. What main themes and ideas did you notice in Genesis chapters 12 - 50 as you read? Can you point to any particular passages where you found them?

Key
Theme

1

Yahweh initiates His plan to rescue humanity through His covenant with the family of Abram”

GEN 12, 15, 17

Genesis 12:1-3 is a key moment in the unfolding of the biblical story: God chooses one family out of the scattered nations from Genesis 11 so that He can rescue all nations.

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM CONSISTS OF A NUMBER OF KEY ELEMENTS THAT ARE DEVELOPED IN CHAPTER 12-22



**ABRAHAM AND SARAH
GROWING INTO A NATION**

Genesis 12:1, 15:5, 17:1-8

**INHERITING THE
LAND OF CANAAN**

Genesis 12:7, 15:7-21

**RECEIVING A
GREAT NAME**

In contrast to the Babel-Builders in
Genesis 11:4

**ALL NATIONS WILL
FIND GOD'S BLESSING
THROUGH THIS FAMILY**

Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 22:18

Q. What character traits of God are displayed in His decision to “Bless” all nations through Abraham after the disaster of Babel? (Genesis 11)

Key
Theme

2

God’s blessing to the nations through Abraham provides the foundational storyline for the rest of the Bible.

**GOD
“BLESSED”
HUMANITY IN THE
BEGINNING**

Genesis 1:26-28

HUMANITY FORFEITED THAT BLESSING THROUGH REBELLION AND SIN AND BROUGHT ABOUT THE CURSE OF FRACTURED RELATIONSHIPS AND ULTIMATELY DEATH.

Genesis 3:14-19

GOD RESTORED THE PROMISE OF BLESSING FOR HUMANITY THROUGH THE LINE OF NOAH AND THEN TO ABRAHAM.

Genesis 9:1, 12:1-3, 18:18, 22:18

GOD REPEATS THE PROMISE OF BLESSING TO THE NATIONS TO EACH GENERATION AFTER ABRAHAM.

ISAAC

Genesis 26

JACOB

Genesis 27, 28, 35

JOSEPH & Beyond

Genesis 48

PAUL DESCRIBED THE CHURCH AS THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM IN MESSIAH JESUS AND BECOME PART OF HIS FAMILY.

Ephesians 1:3, Romans 4

Q. Tally up all the ways Abraham's family makes bad decisions that threaten God's desire to bless them. Why should this part of the story both challenge and comfort us? (Genesis 12- 22)

Key
Theme

3

The drama of Genesis 12-50 consists of the sin and folly of the family of Abraham and how they constantly put God's promise into jeopardy.

ABRAHAM

ENDANGERS THE PROMISE OF A LARGE FAMILY BY GIVING AWAY HIS WIFE, TWICE!

GENESIS 12, 20

SARAH

TRIES TO FORCE GOD'S HAND TO GIVE THEM A CHILD BY HAVING ABRAHAM SLEEP WITH HAGAR

GENESIS 16, 21

ISAAC

GIVES AWAY HIS WIFE REBEKAH

GENESIS 26

JACOB

IS A THIEF AND A LIAR AND GAINS THE BLESSING BY STEALING

GENESIS 25, 27

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

TRY TO KILL HIM

GENESIS 37

THE POINT

Abraham's family is so dysfunctional that divine promises will only be fulfilled through God's faithfulness, not theirs.

Q. What are the lowlight moments in these stories that show us how God works in the world and who he uses? What does this teach us about God's grace in dealing with people? (Genesis 27)

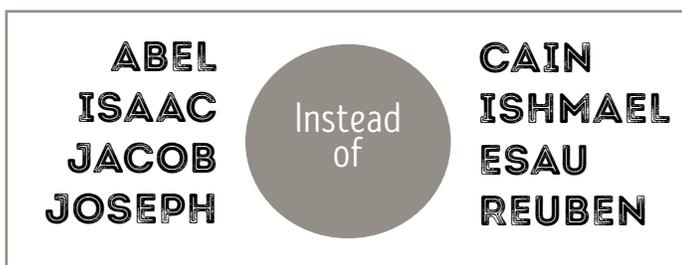
Key
Theme

5

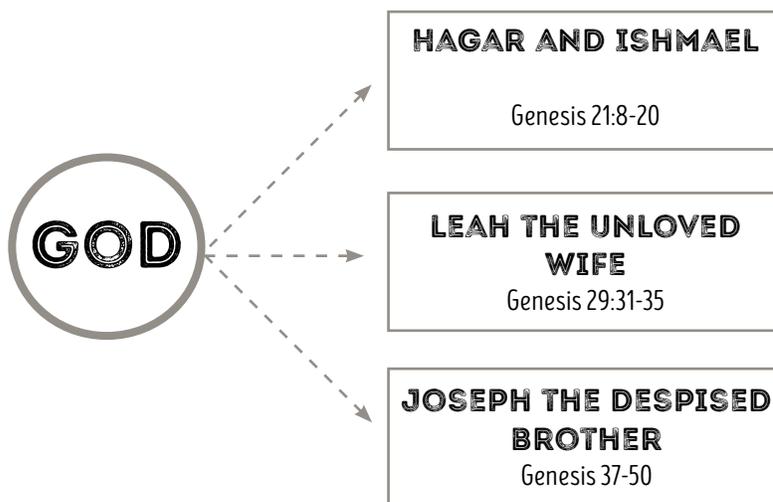
The pattern of how God works in the world begins in Genesis and continues through the Bible; He works through people of low status who are weak and marginalized.



God does not make the firstborn sons the vehicles of his promise, but rather the unexpected children.



God moves towards those who are rejected.





Where's Jesus?

Q. In Genesis 49 Jacob is on his death bed when he calls his twelve (12) sons in to offer them a final blessing. When he gets to the 4th son, Judah, who is the king that will come from his line to command the obedience of the nations and restore God's blessing to the world? (Genesis 49:8-12)





Grow

These questions are designed to help you look at yourself, be aware and honest about who you are in light of your interaction with Scripture, and consider any appropriate actions.

Q. This is only the 2nd week of the year and we've already plowed through 45 chapters of Genesis trying to understand the major themes and story arch of the Scriptures. Take a minute to pause and reflect. As you read this week, did you notice any of these themes we've discussed or was it difficult to sift through?

Q. How has this whole project made you feel so far? Stimulated, grounded and intrigued - or - discouraged, disoriented, and overwhelmed? Be honest with yourself. There's no need to fake it. This year is a marathon, not a sprint. It's really important to be thoughtful and reflective as you work through it.

* Study synopsis, information and questions generated directly from materials provided by Reality Church SF - Year of Biblical Literacy and The Bible Project.

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