

Lesson 1: Introduction & Gen 1:1-2:3

Hebrew title – “In the beginning”

Greek – “origins”

Origins of who/what?

- Origin of the world
- Origin of God’s chosen people Israel – that is where the story heads
 - Abraham (Gen 12) and by the end of Gen they are in Egypt
 - Ends with Joseph telling them to bury him in the land promised his fathers. By end of Pentateuch they are on the edge of that land.
- Redemption – from the first sin God has been seeking to bring redemption to people. He would pave the way through his promise to Abraham.
- Jesus Christ – Genesis points to Christ (Gen 1:26)

Who wrote Genesis?

- Genesis never says who wrote it. It is anonymous.
- Gen-Deut called “Book of Moses” (2 Chron 25:4, Ezra 6:18, Neh 13:1)
- Jesus refers to Moses as the author (Mt 19:7, 22:24; Mk 7:10, etc)
- A few verses not written by Moses:
 - Deut 34 = death of Moses
 - Gen 11:28 – Chaldeans (not called that for 500 after Moses years as best we can tell)

Competing stories

Lots of people wondered where the world came from. Lots of stories emerged as to how it happened by various groups of people in the ancient world.

Enuma Elish – Babylonian creation story (Sarna, 4-8)

Water was in the beginning and out of that water and out of those waters arose the gods. They multiplied and multiplied and got angry with one another. The older gods fought the younger gods and the god Tiamat was killed by Marduk who took Tiamat’s body and sliced it in two. One half became the heavens and the other half became the earth. Marduk gave the gods functions but they got upset by that so they made humans to do their work (dig ditches, etc)

- Creation story in Genesis is VERY different from those stories.
- Those stories involved chaos, violence, bloodshed, and conflict. It involved “gods” in competition with one another who create mankind to do the work left over from some gods who got angry and quit their day jobs.
- Those stories also presupposed that matter already existed and that the gods were made from that and made others out of it as well. Not so in Genesis 1.
- Genesis gives us a different picture – God is not in conflict with other powers. God speaks and it happens. God has full authority to create with no opposition.

- In Genesis, as Sarna says, God is given no biography (p.10)

Our story – Genesis 1-2

Are these “days” 24 hour periods?

- Sun and moon are not created until day 4...does that give us an answer?
- And yet each day has a morning and evening
- Confusing...Genesis is not interested in answering that question otherwise it would have. We are more interested in that question than Genesis is.
- Genesis is interested in who God is and what God has done in creating the world.

God as creator of all things

- “Bara” – 48 times in OT every time God is the subject. God alone is creator. God was not created (**Rev 21:6**)
 - This word never has “materials” to go along with it. It is about making something exist that was not previously.
- Created heavens and earth
- What did God create? – Heavens and earth

Pairs – God creates space. God fills space (Longman, 105)

Day one Light/darkness	Day two Sky/water	Day three land
Day four Sun, moon, stars	Day five birds, fish	Day six animals/humans

Day 1

- **God not only creates the heavens, the earth, and light. God creates order from chaos.** The deep/the sea – yam.
- It is not evil chaos...it is chaos of an unordered world that God is ordering. Remember, he is the potter molding things the way he wants them to be.
- Earth started formless and empty. Longman calls it the “blob” that God forms into what he wants it to be over the course of creation.
- Here God creates time (Walton, 79)...When it says he created “Light” it is not the word for physical light but the word for a period of time that has light in it (day time)
- Evening then morning? – Jewish mindset was evening was first part of the day

Day 2

- **Creation of the sky and waters**
- Ancient mindset was that there was a dome in the sky that held up the waters (how else would water fall?...where was it stored?)
- The area under the dome = sky. The area above the dome = heavens.

Day 3

- **Creation of dry ground and seas. Creation of vegetation**

- God has now made time, weather, seasons...things are ordered to work out. Vegetation cannot grow where there is no light or water. Only makes sense it comes after those things are created.

Day 4

- Created sun and moon and stars
- Seasons, time marked – sun tells when days begin and end moon tells when the months cycle through. God is bringing order.
- Not only does God create them, make them...he makes them in a way that brings order to creation!

Day 5

- Created living creatures in the sea and sky...those spaces now inhabited but not the earth...Why? Goes back to God dividing the waters above and below, parallel.

Day 6

- Created land animals and mankind
- God blessed mankind (1:28)
- Potter and clay – the language for man being made from dust is the same language as potter forming clay.

Distinction of mankind:

- Like the earth, we were also formless – dust/clay – to be formed by God.
- God created male and female
- God created in his image
 - This word, according to W.B. was used of what kings would do when they couldn't be present in an area...they would set up a royal image that would serve as a reminder of the king, his power and authority.
- God breathed life into them
- "very good"
- Dignity and blessing
- Only part of creation in conversation with God
- God completed creation with making mankind.

Creation of mankind compared to other creation accounts:

- Enuma Elish – created from dust and blood of a demon
- Atrahasis – created to do manual labor for disgruntled gods
- Longman points out these have a low view of humanity

What does this mean for us? - We are special and valued by God. We get our purpose from God. We get our identity from God.

Day 7

God

What does this teach us about God?

- God is creator & sovereign in the universe
- God is powerful
- God is caring
- God is unique and without equal
- God is not male or female – this is different from all the religions around them who were preoccupied with the “gods” having sex (Longman, 108, Sarna 13)
 - Equality of men and women before God (Longman 108)

Institution of three things before the first sin:

1. Marriage (2:23-25)
2. Work (2:12)
3. Sabbath (2:2-3)

God created everything “good” – and yet today the world does not seem to be such a good place. *Why?*

- Why do bad things happen to good people?
- How does an all powerful God allow these things to take place?

Lesson 2: Genesis 2 & 3

Creation of man (2:7):

- **Formed** (potter forms) from dust of the ground (sometimes overlaps with clay)
 - Connection with our death – this is where we start and this is how we end.
 - Full circle
- **Breath** – Breath is a sign of life (Ezek 37:7-10)
 - Just as God exhaled creation – spoke it into existence. God breathed life into man.
 - Said of animals in 7:22
- God first made a lifeless body then gave him life
- Jews believed that God breathed life into all people, not just Adam. He continues to do that until this day (Psalm 139:13)

2:8-14 leave you wondering what the man is up to.

His job (2:15):

- Be fruitful, fill the earth and subdue it (1:28) = authority over the creation and creatures
- Work and tend the Garden of Eden (2:15)

The command (2:16):

- First command in the Bible
- Does not mention tree of life (2:9 & 2:24)

Man's need for community – the creation of woman (2:18-25):

What need does God recognize in 2:18?

God “formed” the animals and “brought” them to the man (same verb as formed Adam above)

Why were they not suitable helpers?

Do you see the role of men and women as one of authoritative subservience or of complementation?

Why do we need community so much?

How does God himself live in community by his very nature?

Does that have anything to do with being made in God's image?

Made from a rib? – The word there just means out of his side and would typically mean flesh and bone and not a single rib. See 2:23 – bone and flesh.

“A part of him is missing” (Walton, 178) and so he is going to go and be with her.

Naked with no shame (2:25) – why did they have to ruin this for us all?

Why would this change after eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil?

- Once you know what evil is you are able to lust and do evil things. Eating from that tree, violating that command was an open door to all of the evil mankind has done since.

Free will – God made them with the ability to choose. He gave them only one rule and it was their choice to obey or disobey (2:15). Consequence = death.

The Fall of Man – Genesis 3

Serpent (3:1-5):

- Word play between “naked” and “crafty” – very similar in Hebrew (See Walton, 204)
- Creature/created – cunning/shrewd
- Is this Satan?
 - Rom 16:20 & Gen 3:15
- His approach:
 - Doesn't specifically question God's command at first.
 - Gets her to interpret God's command
 - She says it a little different (no “certainly” die)
 - Then he questions her interpretation of it.
 - Last, he points to a real and true benefit of the fruit (See 3:22)

Sin (3:6-24):

- *What is sin?* – Disobedience to God's commands
- *What is its consequence?* (Rom 3:23)
- *Are there little sins and big sins?*
- *Where was Adam?* 3:6
 - The command came before Eve was created (2:15) but due to her retelling it she obviously knew the rule. Was her retelling what Adam told her, leaving off the “certainly” part?

How does Satan make something so bad look so good? Why do we bite?

What are the fruits that we are tempted to eat and how does Satan repackage them to appear pleasing?

What was the consequence of their sin? When?

Encounter with God (3:7-24):

- Grace – God didn't strike them down right there but he did punish them. God even provided for them further in 3:21
- *What were their punishments?*
- *Why such a harsh punishment over eating from a tree in the garden?*

- It wasn't even that it was fruit and they ate it.
- Points to the heart – they knew God said not to. They were told they could be like God/on level with God. They tried to grab hold of that (contrast that with Phil 2:6)

Adam – pass the buck. He really tried to blame this on God – “The woman YOU put here...”

Curses – notice the order – serpent, woman, man (did he have feet prior like a lizard?)

Preexistent Christ? – 3:22

Our story:

Now, this is not just the story of the first two people God made. This is our story too. God starts us all off good but then we start making choices...some good and some bad.

God is good and all that God made is good. Death entered the world through sin. We did that...not just Adam and Eve but each and every one of us.

How are all of our sins very similar to what Adam and Eve did here?

How is the motivation of all sin, at its core, trying to be like God (not love, grace etc...but his power and authority specifically)?

How does sin impact our lives today, what consequences do we face?

How can our choices either bring us more in line with Eden or remove us further from what God intended?

Brain teaser - 3:22 – Were they immortal prior to their sin? Had man eaten from the tree of life previously? Were they immortal?

Lesson 3: Cain and Abel (Gen 4)

The consequences of knowing good and evil – the door has been opened:

Did you know that worship was the context of the very first murder?

First story of worship

First story of offering sacrifice

First words of praising God (4:2)

Cain – qanah = “to get or create” – actually her words in 4:1 are the first words of worship in the Bible.

How did they know to give an offering? - It never says they were commanded to do this.

1. loved God
2. There was a command that wasn't recorded.

First sacrifice:

Why do you think there hadn't been recorded as happening prior to Gen 4?

- Sin? - This sacrifice doesn't seem to be about forgiveness of sin
- More of a fellowship offering – Before this chapter they fellowshiped with God “Face to face”
- Now they were distanced from God and had to fellowship with him and worship him from a distance.

The offerings:

- Cain's – some of the produce of the field
- Abel's – fat portions – best part of his animals

How did God respond?

Why? Why did God treat them different?

- Type - Animal vs plant?
 - Lev 2:1-3 – They had grain offerings. So it wasn't that grains/plants were displeasing to God in and of themselves
 - They had grain offerings in the OT – wasn't the fact it was produce.
- Was it the quality
 - Exo 23:19 & 34:26 – bring in the best that comes out of your field
 - Compare what Cain brought with what Abel brought

What was God looking for?

What does that reflect of the man who offers it?

- God was looking at the heart that motivated a certain quality of gift whether good or bad

Is it possible for us to give something to God that is in the right category but not the right quality? How?

Continuity in Cain's Reaction:

What two things did Cain do wrong and how were they related?

- There was continuity between Cain's offering and his reaction to Abel.
- His heart was in the wrong place both times.

How is there a link between our worship and what is going on in our lives?

- If we struggle with anger toward our brothers and sisters we show that our heart is in the wrong place. Jesus said if you have a problem with your brother, leave your offering and go reconcile that and then come worship God (Mtt 5:23-24).
- You cannot be angry and give God your best.

Sin:

How does God define or describe sin in 2:7?

How is sin destructive?

How is sin more than just breaking rules? (W.Bruegg)

Abel gave his best while Cain settled to give God something, whatever.

- *What things keep us from giving God our best?*
- *How can fear keep us from giving God our best?*

Jealousy – Cain's struggle for acceptance here.

Do you ever feel jealous? What makes you feel that way?

Have you ever felt that way of others at church?

How do we respond when we see someone else receiving God's favor and we feel left out?

Robbing God vs. giving God our best - Malachi 1:6-14

Cain murders Abel

Why do you think he did that?

Are we more like Cain than we think?

- Are we any less guilty? Jesus said we murder people with our anger (Mtt 5:22).
- If you have ever looked down on Cain remember that we have all had some of those same feelings.
- Cain may be better than us in some ways - *Do you think he knew he could kill his brother?* - We know if you smash someone on the head they might die...what if Cain didn't even know that?

God approaches Cain:

God loves to put the ball in our court and see how we respond. It is like he is giving us a chance to fess up. Often the coverup is worse than the crime. *Why is that?*

Why is it important to be honest with God about our sin?

How does God respond to us if we are honest and upfront with him, repentant?

Examining Abel

Then there is Abel...without any command he offered up his best.

What is the difference in someone who needs a command vs someone who doesn't?

- Maturity and motivation

What is the maturity difference between someone who needs God to tell them where, when and how much to offer vs. someone who knows if they are going to offer God something it will be there best?

What motivated Abel to give so generously?

What does it say God did in response?

- Words means "grace" –
- God later shows grace to Cain too

Offerings and trust:

How are offerings directly related to trust?

How does the quality of our offering display the quality of our trust?

What do you have to offer God that would show him you trust him enough to give your best?

The Punishment

- **BIG Question – Who was going to kill him if they were the only people alive?**
- **5:1 – adam had Seth when he was 120. Other generations could have sprung up since, they would still be closely related = even more likely to avenge Abel.**

Comparing ourselves to others:

Lesson 4: Genesis 5-9

The story (25 minutes)

The very good to terrible chart

5 - Very good

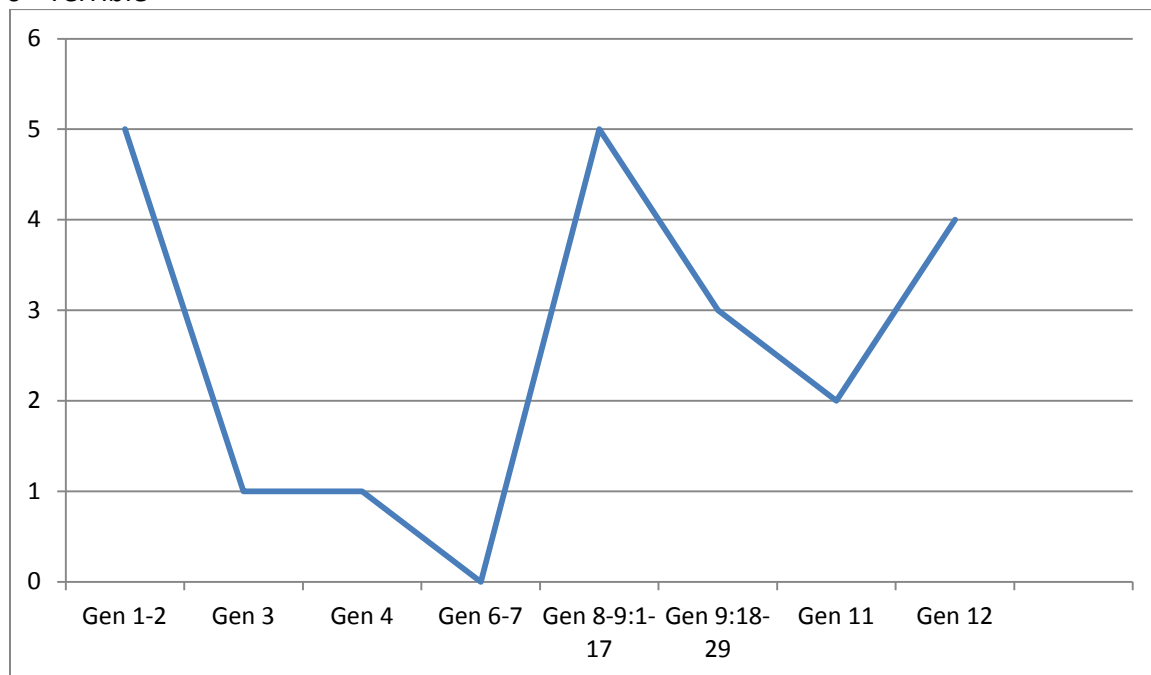
4 - Good

3 - Just okay

2 - Not bad

1 - Pretty bad

0 - Terrible



Narrative flow/how this fits in Genesis

Conflict to Climax (based on Anderson's book From Creation to New Creation)

Growing Tension (6:5-7):

- *What problem does God notice?* - Gen 6:5 – man's wickedness
- *How bad was the problem...like a few mean people or people good some of the time?*
- *What solution does God propose in 6:7?* – Wipe out every living thing
- Uncreation – God is going to undo all the things he gave life to in the beginning

Hints at a solution (6:8-10):

- *Who does God notice and why does that bring some hope to the story?*
 - Ever notice Noah is 600 years old? New mental image of this story
- Favor = grace
- *He walked with God?* – literal or metaphorical?

Chiasm (See Anderson, 72)

A. Violence in God's creation (6:11-12):

- Language gets more intense - Now it is not just the people – the earth was corrupt
- Now everything is very bad!

B. 1st divine address - destruction (6:13-22)

- 6:13 & 7:1 – “And God said” – remind you of anything?
- God is renewing his creation through water.
- 6:22, 7:5 & 7:16 – Noah did all the Lord commanded
- Now it is not the sun and moon obeying...Noah hears God and obeys.

C. 2nd divine address – command to enter ark (7:1-10)

D. Beginning of the Flood (7:11-16)

E. Rising waters (7:17-24)

- Rose – 18,19,20

F. God remembered Noah (8:1)

E. Receding waters (8:1-5)

- Receded – 8:1,3,5

D. Drying of the earth (8:6-14)

Reminds us of Gen 1:9

8:13 – Happy 601st birthday the waters are gone and the land is dry! Yay!

C. 3rd divine address – command to leave ark (8:15-19)

8:17 – be fruitful and increase! Sounds like God was starting over

B. God's resolution to preserve order (8:20-22)

A. 4th divine address – covenant blessing & peace (9:1-17)

Place of the flood in Genesis story - bridges creation and Abraham (Sarna, 44)

Other similar flood stories – Gilgamesh

Sarna points out some drastic differences

- Pagan stories have gods unleash a flood and the gods go nuts because it gets out of control
- Pagan stories have a skilled boatman navigate the waters – Genesis, God sends them around with a wind. There is no rudder or way to exert human control over the situation
- Pagan stories give no reason for the flood like Genesis does
- Pagan stories end with offering to the gods that they swarm over like flies on a carcass
 - This was because pagans in ancient world believed the gods needed food and drink...the flood kept them from getting this so they came and gorged on the sacrifice following the flood.

- Pagan heroes aren't pointed out for their moral qualities. Noah is
- Their gods aren't gracious, ours is

Seriousness of Sin:

- This story demonstrates how serious sin really is.
- First Adam and Eve – punished
- Cain – punished
- Whole earth punished

Do we downplay certain sins?

How can we take sin as seriously as God does?

The Bible tells us what to do in regard to sin - FLEE

1 Cor 6:18 – Flee from sexual immorality

1 Cor 10:14 – Flee from idolatry

1 Tim 6:11 – flee the love of money

But not just flee the bad stuff...pursue the good stuff!

2 Tim 2:22 – flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.

Have you ever actually fled from sin? What does that look like?

- It might be a website you know you shouldn't go to so you don't
- It might be a person you are tempted by that you need to stay away from
- It may be an opportunity that is presented that is wrong and sinful.

Noah's Faith and obedience:

- This is what separates him from the rest of mankind – faith.
- *How do faith and obedience go hand in hand?*
 - Noah could have said he believed in God and believed in a flood but didn't care to build a boat when he was 600 years old.
- **James 1:22-25 & Matthew 7:26**
 - Our obedience is important. It is important because it shows we understand what God has done for us.

What challenges do we face to obedience today?

Why do some Christians downplay the place of obedience in the life of the Christian today?

Rom 12:1-2

We are a living sacrifice...just as Noah offered his sacrifice. We want to be pleasing to God. That means we submit to God and are obedient to God. Kind of hard to be a living sacrifice if you aren't willing to submit and obey.

Covenant (5 minutes):

6:18 – I will establish my covenant with you

9:9,11,12,13,15,16,17

- It is with Noah and his family
- It is with the earth
- It is about not destroying the earth in a similar manner or all life that is on the earth in that manner.
- Eternal – “never again”

What is a covenant?

Covenants were treaties entered into by two parties. Usually a greater party bringing into submission and loyalty a less powerful party. The less powerful party got the blessings of the greater (protection, peace, etc) but they also had to abide by the terms of the agreement.

Are we under any covenants today?

- This one and the new covenant in Christ’s blood (Jer 31:31 & Luke 22:20 & Heb 9:15)

God has made an agreement with us that results in our salvation. He has done his part and we must uphold our end of the agreement.

Application (5-10 minutes):

1 - We are beneficiaries of God’s covenant with Noah. That should give us hope. It gives us assurance that God is just and merciful and that he will make good on his promise to never do that again.

2 – We are to be imitators of Noah’s faith. Today we live in a world that won’t believe in something people have never seen. Yet, Noah built the ark just because God told him too. Faith. Some times we might look pretty silly to the world.

3 – We learn how to deal with circumstances outside of our control:

- *What attributes or characteristics did Noah have that helped him deal with this situation?*
- *What did he do that helped him deal with it?*
- *What did God do to guide him through it?*
- *How did he respond?*
- *How do we listen and follow like Noah, even when things don’t make sense?*

Have you ever had a time in your life that you felt like you were being tossed around by wind and waves with no rudder? How do we let God take control in times like that?

Notice, it was God who let them out (8:16) – Sometimes in life we are in circumstances that only God can get us out of or rescue us from. *Why is it hard to find him in times like those?*

Lesson 5: Genesis 11-14

Genesis 1-11 = Universal history of mankind (Sarna, 67-68)

Genesis 12ff – Zooms into one family

Genesis 11 – the bridge = tower of Babel

Gen 9:7 – God commanded Noah and his descendants to be fruitful and fill the earth

- Be fruitful – **See Gen 10**
- Fill the earth – not so much yet

Gen 9-11 = ZOOM OUT - This story explains how the people got scattered all over the earth, to fulfill God's command to Noah

Gen 11:10-12 = ZOOMING in from Noah to Abram

Babel (Gen 11:1-9)

Where is this?

- Shinar – footnote? = Babylonia
- Babel = Babylon
- Babylonia – Modern Iraq

Babel is primitive Babylonia

Babylon originally pronounced Babilim (Sarna, 69-70) meaning **“the gate of the god”** and was such a huge pagan religious center that it was believed to be the **“navel of the earth”** where heaven and earth met. Here it is called **“Babel”** = confusion of speech (Sarna) in Hebrew.

Babylon was known for its massive ziqqurat (300 feet high & 7 levels) that was used as a temple.

Why did God confuse their language?

- Typically say two things – making a name for themselves (11:4 but see 12:2 with Abram) and building such a tall structure (See 11:6) so that together they couldn't be stopped.

What does the Bible say was the problem?

- 1 – Idolatry – See Josh 24:2
 - Structures often used for pagan worship – they build something up to the gods.
 - It may be that it was going to be used for idolatrous purposes
 - Twice this is reversed – God came down and did something to them rather than them going up to do something to God.
- 2 – Scattering
 - 11:4 – so we may not be scattered
 - 11:8 & 9 – God scattered them

- Look back at Gen 9:7 – they had not filled the earth

Zooming In on Abram (Gen 11:10-32)

- 11:10-32 – From face of whole earth to one specific family.
- *Why is Abram/Abraham important? Why focus on him and not his next door neighbor?*
- This is the story of God's people and God's covenant that was initiated through this one family.

Rom 4:9-25 (Faith – righteousness = Gen 15:6 & circumcision = Gen 17) God's Covenant with Abram (Gen 12:1-9)

Command – 12:1

Promise – 12:2-3

- Great nation
- Bless you
- Make your name great
- You will be a blessing
- All peoples on earth blessed through you
 - *How?* – through God revealing himself to his descendants and ultimately through one of his descendants being Jesus Christ.

Opposite of Babel – God was going to do this for Abram some of the very things that caused him to disrupt the Babel Builders! The difference is where it comes from – God, not us (back to idolatry)

TENSION

Problem with the Promises – **11:30** – Sarai was barren & No mention of a land to possess – where would they stay?

Obedience – **12:5** – “they set out...they arrived there”

Faith – *How does faith play a role in what Abram set out to do here?*

It was not until he got there that God promised him the land (**Gen 12:7**)

How did Abram respond to that promise? – Worship (See also **12:8**)

Worship flows out of real life events

What has God promised you?

How has God blessed you?

What should that result in/how does that result in worship?

When you worship on Sunday do you ever reflect on God's work in your life and let your praise spring from that reality? How?

Abram in Egypt (12:10-20)

More tension

Famine – Egypt

Egyptians a threat to the promise

Turns it around – blessed by the encounter (**12:16**) while the Egyptians were cursed by it (**12:17**)

Sarai was 65 and beautiful.

Has God ever taken some brutal tough circumstances and turned them around for good in your life? How?

Purpose of this story – To show that God resolved the **tension**, rescued Abram and would see him through to the **promises** God made.

What promises has God made for us today?

How will he see us through? How?

Rom 8:35-39

Abram & Melchizedek (Gen 14)

Lot and Abram separate over land issues.

God's promise of land from 12:7 is now elaborated on in 12:14-18

TENSION & PROMISE

Again, along with the promise, tension builds

Battle - Five Canaanite kings vs Four kings (including kings of Sodom and Gomorrah (where Lot had moved – **13:10-12**) – even given a little aside that it would be destroyed.

- Canaanites got tired of being ruled (near where Lot lived)...rose up...got smacked down

Is the promise threatened? – Not in the least because God is watching.

In the process Lot got taken along with his people.

Read 14:11-24

14:20 – God gave the victory

Melchizedek – king-priest from Jerusalem (Salem)

Began the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham (Sarna, 116-117)

- Blessed Abraham
- Made his name great

Melchizedek mentioned elsewhere in scripture – **Psalm 110:4** and **Heb 7:1-22**

- *How can Jesus be our high priest if he didn't descend from Levi but from Judah? Is there precedent for such a high priest?*

- Jesus is compared to him in several ways:
 - King of righteousness
 - King of Salem
 - Shown in some way to be greater than Abram due to the tithe/blessing
 - Without beginning or end, like Jesus
- Jesus is qualified to be our high priest, the high priest of a new covenant not going back to Levi but to Melchizedek who precedes them all and who even was subservient to Melchizedek because he was in Abram's loins (even though he wasn't born for another 400+ years)

The point is, Jesus is greater than all of these things. Jesus Christ is what all of this pointed to. It wasn't about owning Israel vs owning Iraq. It was about all people being blessed through this lineage, leading to Jesus Christ.

How is God's promise in 12:3 fulfilled through Christ? What does that mean today?

Lesson 6: Genesis 15 – The Covenant

Put away chairs after class

Timeline:

Gen 12:4 – Abram was 75

Gen 16:3 – living in Canaan 10 years (not sure how long he was in Egypt – Gen 12:10ff)

Gen 17 – Abram was 99 years old (Sarah = 90 see 17:17)

What was the promise (Gen 12):

- Great nation (12:2)
- Bless you (12:2)
- Make your name great (12:2)
- All people on earth blessed through you (12:3)

Abraham's Faith:

Gen 15:4-6 – “⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.” ⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “**So shall your offspring be.**” ⁶ Abram **believed** the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”

But

⁷ He also said to him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

⁸ But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

Which of those promises seems easier to believe? Why do you think Abram had a tough time on the land promise but not the descendant promise?

Cutting a Covenant (15:9-21)

Abram's Question & God's Answer

The question Abraham asks in 15:8 – “How will I **know**?” is what the Lord answers in 15:12-21 “**Know** for certain”

God could have said, “Because I said so”

How did God answer his question with certainty?

- Prophecy that would come true
- Change in vocab from “will give” to just “give” (12:7 & 15:18)

- Pass between the pieces – *What does that symbolize?*
 - Called “cutting a covenant”

Who walked between the pieces? Why not Abram too?

- God was the only one who went between the pieces – Abram was a passive recipient of God’s blessings here.

Trusting God to bless:

God is the one who really blesses – *What did Abraham refuse in 14:22-23? Why is it important we have the attitude that God will provide?*

- In 15:14 God says he will provide wealth to his descendants (400 years later!)
- God “will give” the land – 12:7
- Now God “gives this land” – 15:18
- The blessing is real and is now, even though they won’t really possess it until Joshua.

Are there things we should probably turn down because it shows we don’t trust God to take care of us? What if you won the lotto?

Sidenote - What does 15:16 mean? – “your descendants will come back here for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

- Amorites = people in the land of Canaan
- They had turned to sin and God was going to punish them
- See Lev 18:24 & 28
- *Are we in danger of God’s wrath as a nation today? What if we become wicked, vile and corrupt?*

Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 16)

Gen 11:30 – Sarai was barren and had no children

The practice of having children with a slave was well known in the ancient world. The result of a slave who then thought she was equal with the master’s wife was also a common problem and was addressed in the Hammurabi code (Sarna, 127-128).

Why? Because being barren was a social disgrace and bearing children was a blessing. So the slave could see this as a rise in status but that was discouraged.

She is fleeing, probably to her homeland of Egypt (Shur is in the northern part of the Sinai peninsula)

Angel of the Lord intervenes to reconcile this situation:

- *What command did the angel give Hagar?*
- *What name did the angel give her unborn son? Do you ever remember Ishmael as one of those guys in scripture named by an angel?*
- Shema – to hear, El – God = “God hears”
- Prophecy about Ishmael
- **Islam? - 16:10, 17:20 & 21:13** – *promise of a great number of descendants (sound familiar?)*

- Muslims claim Muhammed was descended from Ishmael. Islam = quite numerous

Lesson – Life’s difficulties don’t go away just because you follow God or are in covenant with God.

Why might things actually get tougher once you team up with God?

Genesis 17 (Circumcision & Name Changes Left and Right)

25 years after God first appeared to Abram, God finally lays out specifics of the covenant and initiates it. – PATIENCE!

What is in a name?

- Sarna says more than just a means of identification
- It is identity, tied up with who they are as a person. God said he would make Abraham’s name great. More than just making him famous.

Missy changed her name when we got married – *What did that mean when she did that?*

Name associated with descendants – Deut 25:6 (law concerning the death of a man with no children)

- See Gen 12:2

Abram’s name changed – 17:5

- Abram – Exalted father (Ab/Av = Father)
- Abraham – “father or many”

Sarai’s name changed – 17:15

Circumcision as a sign of the covenant:

“I have made you father of many nations...” *Has that happened yet?*

“I will make you very fruitful”

Different tense but same message – God is faithful (17:2)

- John 14:1-4 – Jesus says it in present tense...while we haven’t experienced it yet it is as good as gold.

17:10-14 – Circumcision a sign that they are God’s people in covenant with the Lord.

- Every male
- 8 days old
- Forever
- Not done = cut off from the people (pun intended)

Isaac – “he laughs” (17:17 & 19)

Ishmael – God hears...also a great nation

Forever –

- Land promise = forever
- Covenant = forever
- Circumcision = forever

- Olam = forever and it is also used of Hannah's dedication of Samuel to the temple (1 Sam 1:22) and of the Aaronic priesthood (Num 25:13) both of which came to an end at some point.
- No end in sight...this is not temporary (Walton, 450)

17:23 – He circumcised his household

Circumcision, Abraham, and the New Testament:

Romans 3:21-31

- Righteousness apart from the law/circumcision open to all (3:30-31)
- Boasting is only by faith (3:27)

Romans 4:1-3 – Abraham was righteous by faith as a credit/gift

- Jews thought only the circumcised could be righteous because of the covenant with Abraham.
- Paul's point is – Abraham points to the righteousness being open to all
- **Rom 4:9-12 & 4:16-17 – Life where there was no life. Righteous before circumcision**

Last Read Rom 4:18-25

- There are things that seem impossible to us but are possible with God
- Death seems hopeless...but not with God
- 99 year old to father a nation seems hopeless...but not to God
- *What in your life seemed hopeless but turned out it wasn't to God?*

God has made us promises and he wants us to believe him – John 14:1-4 in present tense because while we have not experienced it yet it is in process.

Application:

- *What do you put your faith in?*
- *Are there areas in your relationship with God where you struggle to trust him?*
- *Do you really have faith in God or just believe God exists? What is the difference?*
 - Heb 11:1 – Faith certain of what we hope for
 - James 2:14-24 – Faith+Works & Righteousness

Lesson 7: Genesis 18-19 Sodom and Gomorrah

This story bridges the promise of Isaac with God's judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah

Comparing Abraham, Lot and the people of Sodom:

Abraham's Hospitality:

Gen 18:3-8 –The hospitality of Abraham

How did Abraham show his visitors hospitality?

What does that say about Abraham's heart and attitude toward others?

Seems he took it seriously when God told him he would be a blessing to others. He really tried to do that.

Lot's hospitality:

Gen 19:1-3

What did Lot do to show hospitality to his guests?

He defends them to the bitter end.

Lot's daughters – may not be what we think. Walton (p.477) says he may be saying that in order for them to see how wicked they really are and have a moment of repentance. But they aren't phased by it.

Sodom's Inhospitallity:

Gen 18:20 & 21, Gen 19:4-9 & Ezek 16:46-50

Outcry

What does outcry imply?

Outcry – This term is used several times in Genesis to refer to a victim's cry for justice. It shows that something heinous is taking place and that righteous judgment needs to happen. It shows a complete disregard for others.

People point to the sin of Sodom being homosexuality. It was more than that act itself. It was a complete disregard for God. It was a completely unrepentant attitude. It was cruelty

Have you ever been on the oppressed side of the equation? Did you cry out to God and what happened?

The Sins of Sodom:

What was the sin of Sodom?

- Mistreatment of people
- Disregard for righteousness
- Arrogance
- Didn't help the needy
- Detestable behavior (See Lev 18:22)
- *How would you summarize all of those things?* - a genuine lack of care and concern for their fellow man.

Application – using people

- Extreme – Jaycee Dugard, kidnapped at 11 and raped for 20 years. Phillip Garrido was her kidnapper. His use for her was his own gratification.
- Less extreme – how do we use people for our own advantage? Do we see people for what they can do for us or do we love people for who they are.
- The disadvantaged – how do we view them? Are we less likely to spend time with them or invest in them because they have no means of advancing our lives?
- *In what ways do we use or abuse people today?*
- *How can that reflect the same calloused heart of the people of Sodom?*

Sin of Lot's Wife:

What was the sin of Lot's wife?

- The command - 19:17
- The sin – 19:26 – she looked back
- Notice Luke 17:28-32
 - *What does Jesus seem to say her sin was?*
 - Walton points out that her turning around was not just a sin of looking back but that she actually tried to return to the city. See Luke 17:28-32 where Jesus implies this.
- So the sin could be just her looking back or it could be more.

Hospitality & Justice Today:

- Treating people with love and respect is near the heart of God
- *Is hospitality a lost art?*
- *How can we practice hospitality today?*
- *How can we stand up against injustice today? How do we speak for those who have no voice today?*

What do we learn about God?

1. God is just. He will not put up with those who oppress others.
 - a. 18:20-21
 - b. 19:13
 - c. *You never want to be on the side doing the oppressing?*
 - d. *Are people oppressed today? Just overseas or in our backyard as well?*
 - e. *How do we play a role in standing up for the righteous, as Abraham tried to do?*
2. God is all knowing but still willing to listen.

- a. Gen 18:22-32 – *What does this conversation teach us about God?*
 - b. *Is it comforting to know God is willing to work with us?*
 - c. Relate this to prayer – Sometimes our prayers are like this. We are talking about things we don't see clearly but God works it out (Rom 8:26-27)
 - d. *Have you ever tried to deal with God? How did it turn out?*
 - e. *When do we usually find ourselves in that position?*
 - i. When things are obviously out of our control – we try to regain control by making deals with God
 - f. God is willing to work with us from where we are at and move us forward.
3. God is not like the “gods” of the pagans:
- a. Babylonian story called “Poem of the Righteous Sufferer” (See Sarna p.147-148)
 - i. “What is good in one’s sight is evil for a god. What is bad in one’s own mind is good for a god. Who can understand the counsel of the gods in the midst of heaven?”
 - ii. In other words – the gods are corrupt and unrighteous. They have no moral standard or righteousness. They cannot be counted upon to do right or judge justly.
 - iii. Not so with YHWH!
 - b. *How does it give us comfort that God is just?*
 - c. *Why should we appreciate the grace of God all the more?*

Application:

Do we trust in the promises of God? Do we really believe they are going to happen?

- Sarah laughed because it all still seemed impossible
- Do we take God’s promises seriously?

Have you ever had to stand up for justice? How? What happened?

Have you ever experienced the consequences of sin? If willing to share, how so?

How does that motivate you to live righteously?

Lesson 8: Genesis 20-22

(This lesson done by Regan Stoehr)

Read: Boarding the SS Dorchester on a dreary winter day in 1943 were 903 troops and four chaplains, including Moody alumnus Lt. George Fox. World War II was in full swing, and the ship was headed across the icy North Atlantic where German U-boats lurked. At 12:00 on the morning of February 3, a German torpedo ripped into the ship. "She's going down!" the men cried, scrambling for lifeboats.

A young GI crept up to one of the chaplains. "I've lost my life jacket," he said. "Take this," the chaplain said, handing the soldier his jacket. Before the ship sank, each chaplain gave his life jacket to another man. The heroic chaplains then linked arms and lifted their voices in prayer as the Dorchester went down. Lt. Fox and his fellow pastors were awarded posthumously the Distinguished Service Cross. Today in the Word, April 1, 1992.

Read: Genesis 20

What is the key point in chapter 20? Second time Abraham identifies Sarah as sister. Main point is not pointing to Abraham, but to point the result of this agreed-upon ruse.

Abraham and Abimelech

Verse 1. Abraham's lifestyle drives him to Gerar. Gerar location is uncertain, but likely between Gaza and Beersheba. Most archaeologists point to Tell Haror, fifteen miles northwest of Beersheba, Abraham lived between Kadesh and Shur. He wanders (NIV "stayed" in Gerar).

Kadesh and Shur- base of operations

Gerar-station for flocks and herds. (Gerar is about thirty-five miles from Hebron. (Where Abraham was in the previous chapters.)

Verse 2. Second time in the text we read that Abraham refers to Sarah as his sister, but it is not unlikely that this was their regular custom when they are in unfamiliar places (see 20:13.) The ruse is not the central point, the results are.

Verse 3. God speaks to Abimelech in a dream.

Dreams in Old Testament times-

- Near East-dreams are one of the most common forms divine revelation is believed to take for the uninitiated.
- Mari texts-it is usually those who are not among the professional temple personnel who receive messages by means of dreams.
- Mesopotamian- are usually brought from the gods by the deity Zaqiqu, whose name is derived from a word meaning spirit or breadth, but here God is depicted as speaking directly.

In auditory dreams God appears and sometimes startles the person awake. The dream in verse 3, content was a spoken message by deity rather than events or symbolic images. Dreams are often momentous, sometimes and sometimes warning the king of offenses or approaching disasters.

Which dreams can you think of in the OT?

- Abraham (Genesis 20)
- Joseph dreams (Gen 37)
- Moses (Num. 12:6)
- Gideon (Judges 7:13)
- Solomon (1 Kings 3:15).

Verse 7 contains the first term of “prophet” in the OT. God identifies Abraham as one who is capable of intercession on Abimelech’s behalf.

Prophet

- Offered message from deity, here in v. 17 it is a prayer for healing.
- Powerful connections to deity, such that he can initiate or remove curses.
- It is clear that the plague on Abimelech’s house has something to do with barrenness. Possibly Abimelech requires healing too? Anything that prevented childbirth could be described as “closing the womb.” (verse 18). In the diagnosis of medical conditions in the ancient Near East tended to be symptomatic (identifying consequences) rather than ontological (identifying causes).

Chapter 21

Isaac birth is reported in 21:1-7.

Obstacles:

Fertility obstacle: With Isaac finally born, a miracle of child being born has taken place. Sarah was barren during her childbearing years and has passed from a woman who was barren during her life to a woman who has passed through menopause. In that sense, Sarah’s womb is twice dead in terms of fertility.

Ishmael obstacle: 21:8-13 Ishmael is not only an obstacle to Isaac, but he is also an obstacle to Abraham: Abraham is attached to his son Ishmael. This text details Ishmael’s separation just as chapter 13 moved Lot out of the picture. Lot’s removal had to do with claims of land. In similar fashion Ishmael’s claims have to do with family. He is assigned his own family but has no claims within the covenant family of Abraham.

Brink of extinction?

Verses 21:14-19.

Abraham’s family spent most the chapters on the brink of extinction because of Sarah’s barrenness. Lot’s family was on the brink of extinction, leading his daughters’ actions to preserve the line. Here Ishmael is on the brink of extinction, so it looks as if his life is going to be wiped out. This foreshadows possibly Isaac’s early departure. Verse 17 (the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven”) parallels verse 22:11 (22:11 “the angel of the Lord called out to him (Abraham) from Heaven.”

Takeaway:

From Genesis 21- Abraham is establishing roots in the land-digging wells, and planting trees. Additionally, as relationships are established with the peoples in the land, the blessing is taking root.

Finally the relationship with God is taking root as land and family come established. Just as we think there is security, we find out in chapter 22 there is going to be another major hurdle.

Genesis 21- Child barrenness?

- Clearly God is capable of opening or closing womb. (Gen 20:18) (close) open (Gen. 29:31)
- We are not in a position to say that someone's condition has nothing to do with God or has come about without any involvement from God.
- Natural world does not always reflect God's justice. Job 38:26, rain is a blessing from God; it does not always function with a blessing context.

Genesis 22

Verse 1 In the Hebrew text, author uses the term "The God" which, Elohim being could be translated "the gods." Only other time it is in the Pentateuch used is in Exodus 20:20 as far a test.

Other designations:

1. Used as the object when someone is said to walk with God (Enoch 5:22,24, Noah 6:9)
2. Used when discussing the actions or words of deity with a foreigner (Abimelech, 20:6, 17 Pharaoh 41:25)
3. Used when one of the patriarchs refers to the deity who has been identified by a particular name (Abraham in 17:18, referring to El Shaddai in 17:1, Jacob in 35:7, referring to Yahweh in 28:13) where it has the force of "that God."

The test- God is the subject and the people as the object. When God is testing us, he is testing faith and faithfulness of individuals or of Israel by expecting them to obey in difficult circumstances (Deut. 8:2, Judges 3:4) Israel being provided necessities by God in the wilderness,

22:2 the region of Moriah

- Three day journey from Beersheba, without direction provided.
- Abraham knows where Moriah is located (Gen 14) and knows that the place is not wooded to provide firewood for the sacrifice.
- 22:3-12: Abraham's feeling: Distraught at the prospect of losing his son, Isaac, in this way, emotionally and baffling in the light of the covenant promises

Canaanite worldview- it was normal for human sacrifices. The god who provided fertility (El) was also entitled to demand a portion of what had been produced. This was expressed in sacrifice of animals, grains and children. In Deuteronomy and Leviticus the practice was condemned, however it was still being practiced.

22:13-14: **The ram arrives!**

In verse 8, Abraham is convinced that the Lord will work out the details, and when he does, Abraham names the place accordingly ("Yahweh Yireh," i.e., "The LORD Will Provide")

Mountains where God provides:

- Moriah, Genesis:22:14,
- Jerusalem(Psalm 24:3, Isa. 2:3,)

- Sinai (Num. 10:33).

Renewed Covenant 22:15-24.

- 1) Yahweh swears an oath in his own name (v.16). This element was not included in any of the previous statements of covenant promises.
- 2) This reiteration of the covenant also explicitly promise that Abraham's descendants "will take possession of the cities of their enemies" (v. 17). This is the first indication of a conquest and would be particularly meaningful to the Israelites in the desert.
- 3) Finally, the oath and the accompanying advancements in the covenant agreement are here cited as a consequence of Abraham's obedience (v.18). The statement here does not suggest that the promises are conditional on the future obedience of Abraham and his descendants, but it does identify his obedience as having served as a stimulus for this advance.

Takeaways:

Purpose: An obstacle could place Abraham, Sarah, and the covenant back to square one. This is not an obstacle of childlessness, famine, human strife, and so forth. It is put there by God. The impending death of Isaac that is not the obstacle; rather, it is the prospect that Abraham and his descendants may be more attached to the promised blessings and benefits of the covenant than to God. This obstacle, as much as any of the others, brings jeopardy to the integrity of the covenant.

God's reason for the obstacle: To see what Abraham is prepared to give up. In the end God's reason and God's purpose are one in the same.

- Strengthen Abraham's faith
- Give Isaac a firsthand experience of the God his father has come to know over years of association.
- Enable the world to see how justified God was in selecting Abraham as the recipient of the covenant promises.
- Offer a picture of a father's pain in sacrificing his son, as God eventually did in offering up Jesus.
- Demonstrate how God abhors human sacrifice.

Distance of travel

- Three days Abraham has to live with the haunting specter of what he is going to do.
- Three days of confusion on how God's covenant will be carried out.
- Three days rationalize another course of action and talk himself out of committed action
- The time transforms response from reaction to a decision.

Application:

Tests: what is our motivating factor is our relationship with God? Is it God himself, or is it the benefits he provides and the hope he offers? God's tests may force us to step out our comfort zone of hope expectations, and routines.

Lesson 9: Genesis 23-25

Getting Things in Order

Gen 23-25 is about getting things in order for Abraham's passing & passing on the covenant promises (Brueggemann, 194ff)

Covenant bookends: Gen 12:1-4 & Gen 22:15-18

Getting things in order:

- Genesis 23 – the death and burial of Sarah & owning land in the PL
- Genesis 24 – Lining up descendants through Isaac = finding him a wife
- Genesis 245 – the death of Abraham

Gen 23 – The death and burial of Sarah

23:4 – alien and stranger among you. He owns no land even though the whole land was promised to him and his descendants.

23:16-20 – The field is deeded to Abraham by the Hittities and it is in the land of Canaan.

- First bit of land in the Promised Land owned/possessed by Abraham

Death – seems like the end to some things. Here proves to be a beginning.

How is death really a starting point rather than an ending point?

When else does God's promises have to go through death to see their completion? (Rom 6)

When has God given you a hint that though things seemed tough, he was really up to something better?

Genesis 24 – Isaac and Rebekah

List how many times God/the Lord is mentioned in this chapter:

1. They swear an oath before the Lord about it (24:3)
2. Abraham recalls God's promise (24:7)
3. Abraham recalls God's orders in regard to a wife for Isaac (24:7)
4. The servant prays to the Lord for guidance on his journey (24:12)
5. The servant praises God for answering his prayer (24:27)
6. The servant acknowledges God's guidance (24:27)
7. Laban acknowledges God's blessing on the servant (24:31)
8. The servant acknowledges God's blessings on Abraham (24:35)
9. The servant tells Rebekah's family the story of his journey and purpose and keeps bringing up God's involvement.
10. Last, the servant realizes that he has been successful (24:56)

This chapter shows Abraham and his servant and Laban and Rebekah have a total dependence on God.

Often we think we have handed something over to God if we pray about it once. *What can we learn about depending on God for our decisions in life from this chapter?*

How might we better put God in the center of all of our decisions, great or small, like they did?

Why do we lose our focus?

What standards other than God do we use to make decisions?

These guys were focused on God and it paid off with them making a godly decision. **One of the biggest questions is how to discern God's will in any given matter.** It certainly helps with both sides are trying hard to determine that, pray about that and work toward it.

Genesis 25 - The Death of Abraham

Faith and trust in God:

If you were 175 years old, what would be on your bucket list?

What sorts of business would you want to tidy up?

What would your priorities be?

When we get older or closer to death things get into crystal clear focus on what is most important. *What is on your list of priorities at that point? Why?*

Is that list different than our list of what is important today? How do we determine our priorities when we are far from the death bed?

How might we get those two things more in line with each other?

At the end of the day, what was most important for Abraham was God/the covenant and his family.

Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:19-34)

Isaac and Rebekah are unable to have kids just like Abraham and Sarah. Just like Abraham God promised Isaac would have descendants (Gen 17:19 & 21:12)

Married - Isaac was 40

Birth of kids – Isaac was 60

20 years of waiting/trying

What changed? – Isaac's prayer in 25:21

The Struggle between Jacob and Esau:

- In the womb – 25:22-23
- God's providence in selecting Jacob over Esau (Gen 25:23c)
- At birth – 25:24-26
- Treated different by parents – 25:28
- Tension into adulthood/the birthright – 25:29-34

Some believe the jostling in the womb was a battle to see who would be born first. *Why is that important?*

- Inheritance was greater for the first born
- God was showing his favor on Jacob for the covenant promises/lineage

The Character of Jacob:

- Name = deceiver or heel grabber...someone who trips others up
- Steals birth right
- Steals blessing
- Wrestles angel/God? And demands a blessing
- Tricked by Laban to marry Leah instead of Rachel then he tricks Laban to steal his sheep (Gen 30:25ff)
- At his death he gets little respect as Sarna points out on p.183. Compare Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's little eulogy (25:8, 35:29, 47:9)

The birthright (25:29-34):

Later comes Jacob getting Esau's blessing (Gen 27)

What is a birthright?

- Birthright went to the firstborn. They were considered to be God's special possession (Sarna, 184)
- Family line/lineage went through him
- Firstborn received the blessing of their patriarch/father in order for them to continue on the business of the family and carry on the rights and responsibilities of their family.

ANE documents of birthrights being transferred under extreme circumstances.

Point is – God picked this. God knew all that would happen and prophesied it in advance. Doesn't mean God was okay with deception but it does mean God had a plan and providence to work things out how he saw best.

We are called to be people of integrity. While the way God works is not always obvious to us we know that ultimately God will work it out – Rom 8:28

Application:

What specific things need to be made a higher priority in your life? How would you go about that?

Lesson 10: Genesis 26 – God’s Promises are Being Fulfilled

Similarity with Genesis 20 – Abimelech and Abraham/Sarah where he claimed her as his sister.

Gen 26:1-5 Covenant reminder

Blessing the nations:

- **26:4** – all nations of earth will be blessed
- **26:26-31** – the first fulfillment of that promise through Isaac – a blessing to Abimelech

Promise of the land:

- 26:3 – I will give you this land
- 26:22 – he had plenty of room to grow

Bless you:

- 26:3 – I will bless you
- 26:22 – we will flourish in the land

That is the point of this story – God’s promises are being fulfilled.

Genesis 27 – Jacob Gets Esau’s Blessing

3 things to distinguish here according to Walton (p.554)

1. Birthright = inheritance rights (Gen 25 – Jacob gets this)
2. Patriarchal Blessing = (Gen 27 – Jacob gets this)
3. Covenantal Blessing (Gen 28:3ff – Jacob gets this)

Birthright – double portion of the inheritance

Patriarchal blessing –

- Isaac is investing in and casting a vision for the future of his firstborn.
- He is giving his wishes of how he hopes his life turns out
- He is casting a positive vision for his future

Covenantal blessing – passing on the covenant promises to the descendants

Blessing:

What is the most important thing we can do for our children?

How do we go about doing that?

Having a positive impact on the lives of our children

Instilling in them a love for God

How might we practice this today?

- Faith + Home – blessing our children

Spoken blessing vs. the blessing of example

- What we model for our children blesses their lives. If we live godly lives, model for them what to do when we mess up, etc we are blessing them

What sorts of things can parents do to bless their children?

- Instilling in them faith, morality, ethics, integrity, hard work, etc
- This is more than just a spoken thing...it is our **example**

God is able to work through these things to bring about what He wants
God is not dependent upon us to be perfect in order for things to work out
Bible families are far from perfect

Genesis 28 – Jacob Sent Out

28:7-9 – The difference between Jacob and Esau following the birthright and blessing:

- Jacob sought to please his father
- Esau went out of his way to displease his father

Why do you think that Jacob is now so concerned with pleasing his father and is obeying him?

- Just a few verses before he was willing to trick his dad
- Some times when people have a better vision for life cast for them they try to live up to it.

Functional Behavior

The things people do make sense – functional behavior. Doesn't make it okay but it helps us understand where they are coming from.

- When we meet people – doing some strange things – often a story behind it all.
- Once we understand that we can understand why people do what they do.

Jacob's Dream at Bethel (28:10-22)

- The vision
- The house of God – the place of God's presence
- Jesus' parallel with this in John 1:43-50
 - True Israelite (Jacob's other name)
 - Angels ascending and descending on Son of Man – Jesus is dwelling place of God on earth

Connecting Heaven and Earth:

- *How is God active in our world today?*
- Matt 6:10 – on earth as it is in heaven – God wants us to make the connection.
- Maybe there is more connection between heaven and earth than we know

Jacob's vow (28:20-22):

- Sounds a little self-centered.
- His vow assumes a lot...he is putting the burden of all of these things on God.
- Sounds strange but the truth is, God is the only one who can do all of those things

God's blessings and us:

- God wants to bless his people
- *God blesses us today – how does he do that? What else does he have in store?*
- *What is the real blessing of heaven?*

The difficulty of not getting a specific, personal promise from God:

Read 28:13-15

Why can't it be that easy?

We have general promises for the future but no guarantee that we will marry, have kids, do well/prosper, etc

It takes more faith to stand in our shoes than it probably took for Jacob.

John 20:29 – blessings on those who have not seen and yet believe.

The Jacob Discrepancy

I am not talking about the guy on lost. I am talking about the guy in Genesis who was one of the patriarchs and who got the name Israel after wrestling and angel. I have had a hard time understanding Jacob over the last few years. First there is the Jacob side of the equation:

- His name means deceiver.
- He trips up his brother even at birth.
- He gets his brother's birthright by near extortion.
- Jacob tricks his father into giving him the patriarchal blessing.
- Then his father gives him the covenant blessing.
- He wrestles an angel and demands another blessing!
- To top things off, Jacob swears an oath to God that if God will do everything God said he would do Jacob would give him a tenth in return.

Then there is the God side of the equation:

- God appears to him in a way that we hadn't seen since Abraham.
- God blesses him
- God give him a covenant blessing.
- God makes his lineage the lineage of the covenant when by right it would have been Esau.

The apparent discrepancy between those two lists is what has thrown me in my study of Jacob. I can't get over the fact that he seems like such a scoundrel. I have asked myself on several occasions why would God use such a deceiver and trickster in His master plan? A couple of things hit me this time around that may help answer that question that I would like to share.

First, the reason God did use such a trickster in his master plan may be the same reason Rahab and Tamar share with him the lineage of Christ. God uses the foolish to shame the wise and shows that the good He is able to do in our lives is not dependent upon our getting it right every time.

Second, Jacob didn't have 2000 pages of scripture and the end of the story detailed out in front of him to put his faith in. He just had the promises and those promises had been on the table for some time but they still didn't possess the land (Gen 28:4). So this is a story about faith and God is able to work with him to build his faith even though he doesn't perfectly understand all God is up to.

Third, the New Testament also makes it clear that Jacob is the exemplar of God's sovereign choice,

¹⁰ Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. ¹¹ Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” ¹³ Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

¹⁴ What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses,

“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,
and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”

¹⁶ It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.”

- Romans 9:10-16

These three things help me to see there is more to Jacob's story than meets the eye. It reminds me that God can and will work through my imperfections to bring Him glory, build my faith, and pass on the faith lineage to others. This story now makes me more and more thankful for God's grace and sovereignty.

Lesson 11: Genesis 29 – Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

Genesis 28 – Isaac sent Jacob to find a wife among his family. Jacob left and had a vision of angels at Bethel that encouraged him and really changed his life.

Genesis 29 – What happened once Jacob arrived on his hunt for a wife.

Similarities with Abraham's servant finding a wife for Isaac (Jacob's father).

- He met the women at a well and animals were watered.
- This time it is reversed – Jacob waters their sheep.

Why was Jacob weeping? (29:11)

- This was no easy journey
- He fled from his brother for his life...he has finally met the people he was looking for.
- They didn't have cell phones, mail, facebook...hard to find people
- The mission is so far successful
- Brought him to tears

Why were Rachel & Laban so excited? (29:12-14)

- Rebekah had left nearly 100 years prior...she was Laban's sister and Rachel's aunt.
- Jacob and Rachel are cousins

"you are my own flesh and blood" – **29:14**

- Walton points out that this is more true than he knew...they are both tricksters!

Leah vs. Rachel (29:15-17)

- Weak eyes – people say she was ugly...that is not apparent from this text. I always figured "weak eyes" was a figure of speech for being ugly somehow...no one credible really seems to say that.
- People conclude she was not as attractive because of the "**but**" in **29:17**
- She is contrasted with the beautiful Rachel
- Actually could be that her eyes were "delicate" and were one of her only attractive features.

Jacob's dowry (29:18-20)

- Normal dowry was about 30-40 shekels (Walton, 586).
- This was given by the groom as "insurance" in case he ever left her this would be given up to provide for her.
- Typical shepherd made 10 shekels/year
- 7 years = 70 shekels
- This was more than generous on Jacob's part and a little much on Laban's part to take this from his future son-in-law and family member who was his "own flesh and blood"

Laban's trick (29:21-30):

- Bridal feast
- The old sister switcharoo

- Who really had weak eyes? Jacob's lack of being able to see got him hitched to the wrong woman!
- Setup for trouble – 29:30...he loved Rachel more than Leah

God's intervention in Jacob's love life (29:31-30:24):

- **Notice how much they recognize God's involvement in their lives**
- Women with children were considered blessed by God (29:31).
- Barren women were often considered to be under a curse (20:18 & 30:2)
- In both instances, God is given credit

Judah comes through Leah, not Rachel...the line of David and Jesus

Application:

How often do we see God's involvement in the affairs of our lives?

Is God more involved than we know?

How can we be more in tune with that?

How can we be more inviting of God's presence and will into our daily decisions?

30:1 – Rachel gets jealous

- Not only has she borne Jacob no children
- Her sister names her kids obnoxious names that she has to hear everyday...get over here Happy...come in here Attached...Clean your room "God has seen me and God has vindicated me" ...eat your vegetables "honor" and "reward"

The Mandrakes (30:14-24)

- Rachel gets mandrakes, Leah gets Jacob
- But the mandrakes get Rachel to Jacob and she gets pregnant with Joseph (30:24)
- Mandrakes = aphrodisiac

Jacob's flocks increase (30:25-43):

- Remember Jacob's blessing in 27:27
- It is coming true
- Jacob does some breeding
- Laban is a big sneak – 30:35 – he removed all the speckled ones so they wouldn't breed and give birth to other speckled ones.
- The deal was that he could have all of these – Laban removed them.
- Don't you think Jacob knew this? – He has been tending the flocks this whole time (30:29-30)

30:43 – all that came from Laban's flocks...do you think Laban figured that out?

Jacob flees (Gen 31)

31:7 - *what does Jacob mean that Laban charged him ten times when his pay was in sheep?*

- Probably refers to the dowry – Walton (590) says Laban should have set aside the money/value of Jacob’s 14 years of labor so it could be theirs...seems he didn’t do that. (see 31:15)

Laban pursues...God intervenes

Laban’s response to Jacob’s flight is consistent with his personality. He says he has the power to harm him (31:29)...that is what he has tried to do the whole time. Laban met his match. God watches over it all.

God may not speak in our ear but God is just as involved in our lives as he was then.

Covenant and reconciliation (31:43-55):

- Witnesses
- Sacrifice
- Terms
- All standard covenant procedure in the ANE

Application:

Lots of switcharoos in these stories...birthrights, blessings, wives, sheep, mandrakes

God likes to use “reversal” (Walton, 593) in the way he works.

- 1 Cor 1:25-27 – the foolish to shame the wise
- Matt 23:12 – humbled and exalted
- Matthew 5:1-12 – beatitudes

Grace in this story:

- Grace is the great reversal
- God gave children
- God opened and closed wombs when it was necessary
- God gave the increase in his flocks
- God told him when to leave
- God protected him from Laban
- Grace, grace, grace...who said grace isn’t in the OT?

In what ways has God turned your life around?

How do you feel God looks out for us today?

How can we be more in tune with that?

Lesson 12: Genesis 32-34

Background:

- Jacob tricked Esau out of his birthright and his blessing...Esau was not too happy about that
- Jacob fled because he feared Esau would kill him
- Now Jacob is leaving Laban to come home
- Also, Jacob and Esau are both 97 years old at this point...that certainly gives it a different look!

God reminds Jacob that God is with him – 32:1-2

- Odd that it leaves it right there with no conversation

32:7 - Jacob is afraid and in distress. *What does Jacob do to deal with this terrifying situation?*

- Jacob prayed

Turning to God in times of trouble:

When we are afraid what do we do about it? Do we turn to God first or as last resort?

What do you say to God when you are afraid? – Mike Cope story about his son in the hospital.

- *What did his prayer consist of?* - Calling on the covenant promises of God (32:9)
- Asks for salvation/deliverance from his brother (32:11)
- He quotes back to God what God told him...he is saying his demise at Esau's hand is not compatible with the promises God has made him.

Lessons in reconciliation:

Walton points out what Jacob's three statements his servants were to tell Esau probably implied (p. 603-604):

Read the statement and ask the class what each implies

Jacob and Esau have a broken relationship that needs reconciled.

1. "I have been staying with Laban and have remained there until now." = I haven't been hiding or avoiding you
2. "I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants." = I am not coming to take anything from you. I have enough already
3. "I am sending this message...that I may find favor in your eyes" = Let's move on from all that nasty stuff in the past and start over

What motivates Jacob to do so?

- Fear often motivates us to reconcile.

What other, possibly more healthy, reasons do we have to reconcile with those we have hurt or who have hurt us?

Jacob wrestles an angel, a man, God?

32:21 – All the gifts went on ahead of him but Jacob stayed behind in the camp with his wives, servants and sons (32:22)

32:23 – He sends them on as well and he is left alone.

32:22 – Jacob wrestles with a “man”

The point is not that Jacob is stronger than an angel...the angel disables him in the blink of an eye

The main point - God was testing his persistence (at 97 years old!) in order to institute a change in his character that would coincide with a change in his name – Jacob to Israel (he who struggles with God)

Who was this man?

- 32:30 Jacob identifies him as Elohim = deity
- Hos 12:4 – an angel
- Angels can be referred to as Elohim and as a “ish” – man

Jacob is calling on this angel to offer him the covenant blessings and protections promised by God.

While we don't wrestle with God it is possible that God tests our resolve:

- Heb 12:6 – God disciplines those he loves
- James 1:3 – testing of our faith develops perseverance

Lesson for Jacob – he needed a change of character before entering the next chapter. God was readying him via the wrestling match and humbling him into submission with his Esau encounter.

How do things beyond our control test our faith in God?

Are there things in our character that need challenged?

How has God challenged and grown you in the past through tough things?

Why does it take situations that require total dependency for us to actually live like we totally depend on God?

After this chapter, Jacob is not the same...God is working to make him better (Walton, 610ff)

Genesis 33

Not what you expected! Remember, 97 years old!

33:8-9 is key...Jacob explains why he sent all that...Esau doesn't need it

- This flies in the face of the anti-blessing in Genesis 27:39-40

Irony – Esau offers to protect Jacob

*Why is it that often things aren't as bad as we had thought?
Why do we keep expecting the worst when the worst rarely happens?
How did God answer Jacob's prayer?
If we pray to God for deliverance, should we expect Him to answer us too? Why?*

Genesis 34

This is probably a case of rape
Calling the land "Israel" (34:7) – the land was called Shechem. This is called anachronism where the author, Moses, calls it what it was called in his day rather than what it was probably called at the time.

How could Levi and Simeon kill a whole city of men?

- Just names the sons...probably had help from the servants.

Extreme reaction – the law will later address how far someone can go in retribution (eye for eye and tooth for tooth to ensure things like this don't happen).

Just because it is in scripture doesn't mean God was pleased – **See 34:30 as Jacob was upset by this**

The took the women and children into their camp, effective doing the same thing to them as was done to Dinah only on a larger scale.

34:9-10 – went against the covenant promises to make them into a great nation. The temptation of getting more stuff or follow God and his promises.

How are we faced with that same temptation today?

How do we keep God first and foremost even if it hurts us economically?

Worldview drives behavior (Bruce Mclarty talk for GCCS)

Why is this chapter here? (some of this from Walton, 635)

- 34:31 – should they have treated their sister like a prostitute? Gen 35 – are they treating God like a prostitute?
- Tamar coming up
- Challenge to the covenant promises of intermarrying

Lesson 13: Genesis 35-37 (This lesson by Regan Stoehr)

Jacob, Esau, and Joseph.

Good through evil: We leave off with Dinah being violated. Obviously this is a personal tragedy for Jacob's family. This also turns out to be a serious jeopardy to the entire covenant promise. We read from last week that Jacob's family was going to intermarry with the Hivites, and merge families and societies. The short term gain would mean more economical wealth and prosperity. Long term would result in the assimilation of the family of Abraham and the loss of the distinct identity. Simeon and Levi's massacre of the Shechemites, "saves the day" for they are responding to Dinah being violated, turns out to keep the Israelites from intermarrying between them, sharing wives, idols and societies.

From outward appearances Jacob was not that far from God—only thirty miles distant from Bethel. He had also built an altar at Shechem (33:20), so there must have been some kind of religious observance there. Spiritually, however, Jacob was not near to God at all. Jacob told Esau he would meet him at Seir (33:14), but he went the opposite direction to Succoth, then to Shechem. Jacob somewhat passively accepted the rape of his daughter and even entered into an agreement whereby the purity of the covenant people of God would be lost (chapter 34). Jacob was preoccupied with prosperity and security at the expense of purity and piety. He is near Bethel but not near to the God of Bethel—at least not in chapter 34.

We read about Jacob's family wanting more land, was wanting more land wrong? *Yes since this was done on their own terms and not Gods.*

Have there been times when outwardly you appeared to be close to God, but your heart wasn't there?

Jacob's condition is not that different from many Christians in our own time. We may appear to be walking close to God while the opposite is true. We may still continue to preserve the forms and observe the rituals of piety, but, in fact, the reality is not there.

Genesis 35: 1-15.

v. 1 God calls Jacob to go back Bethel. Jacob could be procrastinating? Maybe in the light of the recent encounters with Shechem and family.

Bethel: This is the place where Jacob makes a vow with God. His promise was acknowledgement of God, setting up a shrine and paying a tithe. Bethel: place where God first appeared to Jacob (28:10-19), Retraced his grandfather Abraham's route (12:8).

V. 2 Jacob tells his entire household to rid themselves of foreign gods and earrings.

Why did Jacob want them to remove themselves of these possessions?

The gold was a competing idol, a sign of loyalty to other gods, are discarded and buried. However burying idols is not the same as destroying them. The Hebrew verb is the same one used when Achan hides the spoils he took from Jericho by burying them in his tent (Josh. 7:21-22).

How are we like Jacob's family today with our idols? Do we think we are hiding sins from God?

v.9. God appears to Jacob again at Padan Aram. This affirms Jacob's name being changed from Genesis 32. The mention of "nations" and "kings" is prominent, but the land is also mentioned. That is appropriate here since it was at Bethel that God told Jacob he would bring him back to the land. Jacob responds buying setting up another pillar and pouring a drink offering at its base.

Genesis 35: 16-29.

Rachel gives birth to Benjamin. Rachel's death in childbirth is ironic, given her demand of Jacob in 30:1, "Give me children or I'll die!" Unfortunately death during childbirth was a common occurrence in the ancient world.

Rachel names her son in the accordance with the misery she faces, Jacob unwilling to let the name stand changes the name.

Benjamin can mean either "son of the right hand, signifying protection and favor or "son of the south"(Since the Ishmaelites oriented themselves with the east, the south was on their right.)

Genesis 36:1-43 Esau's family

We've read of Rachel's death, Jacob's twelve sons and the death of Jacob's father Isaac.

Israel's neighbors to desert audience.

Notable references are:

Amalek, the son of Esau's son and a concubine (36:12)

Just as there were twelve tribes from Jacob, there are twelve from Esau (36:9-14). This may suggest that in some senses Esau has enjoyed a blessing on equal footing with Jacob as far as family size goes.

Another notable name is Uz (36:28), which is the home of Job.

Application:

Good through evil: What begins as a personal tragedy in Jacob's family with Dinah being violated turns into serious jeopardy to the entire covenant promise. Simeon and Levi make a deal with Shechem and the males being circumcised. Then while the Shechem's men were still recovering, Simeon and Levi kill all of them by the sword, an act of revenge if you will.

We see the providence of God at work. The poor decision of Levi and Simeon accomplishes something that was in harmony with God's will. That is that they didn't intermarry and take on assimilation with

Shechem's people. We often think of providence as fortunate turn of events, but here, and in following chapters providence more often than not operates in the context of sinful behavior.

A major lesson that we've learned is how God is able to use the evil that people do, bringing about positive results (though in the process not necessarily eliminating the negative results). This idea is seen throughout the remainder of Genesis and throughout the Bible.

Are God's favors for sale? A rich young ruler came to Jesus seeking eternal life, he was ultimately told to sell all that he had and give it to the poor. (Luke 18:18-30). This does not suggest that the kingdom can be bought. Rather it indicates that this man's wealth poses an obstacle to his entry into the kingdom.

Our society has placed values on everything. How much should be paid in damages to someone who has been deprived of a mother? What is a mother's love worth?

As Christians, what can we do to make sure that we are in love with God and not only blessings?

Have you given God a performance evaluation sometime in your life?

- *Attitude- There is a difference in our attitude when we are giving something as an expression of love.*
- *Expectations-Such gifts as those we give to God are related to love of the giver, not to the service of the recipient. Meaning no expectations expected to the gift.*
- *Accountability- When an individual is being paid for something he or she is expected to do, a system of accountability is generally set up to make sure that the job is done and that it is done adequately. God is not subject to our performance reviews.*

Jacob went through many trials in his life where he was transformed. A transformation for many of us is when we first learned how to ride a bicycle. It was exciting to have this new transportation, how when you first slide your leg over and you were on the seat. All of us were scared to take a foot off the ground and start peddling.

Likewise in our spiritual life, God is patient with us in our transformation. Sometimes we may look back with embarrassment at the things we did in the past that at the time we considered spiritual. We should thank God for his patience in bringing us along and move forward in faith, commitment, and service.

Genesis 37:1-36

God is determined to fulfill the covenant blessings despite character flaws of his chosen family and despite obstacles that occur along the way. He is even able to bring good out of evil.

Verse 1-4. Joseph's status

Jacob and family have been back in Canaan for about decade and have resumed their jobs herders. The favoritism that Jacob had for Rachel has now transferred to her older son Joseph. Joseph receives special status.

The traditional interpretations that the coat of many colors is still the norm for Sunday school curricula. Some scholars favor that this coat was a full length coat or a long sleeved coat, either of which would indicate that Joseph is management, not labor. The best indication that this is true is from the art of the ancient Near East. Egyptian paintings of this period depict well-dressed travelers from Canaan wearing long-sleeved, embroidered garments with a fringed scarf wrapped diagonally from waist to knee.

What is the significance of Joseph coat was now a symbol of management?

Could this make his brothers more jealous of his status?

Where else have we've seen jealousy in Jacob's family? Jacob and Esau.

Verse 5-11. Joseph's dreams

What is the significance of dreams in the time of the patriarchs?

- Dreams in the ancient world were considered derived from the divine realm and were thus taken seriously.
- Dreams by prophets and kings often contained God appearing or manifesting Himself to a person. Dreams were often filled with symbolism, necessitating an interpreter, though at times the symbols were reasonably self-evident. The information that came through the dream was believed to be irreversible.

A second dream in (37:9-10) is symbolic presence of his mother and all eleven brothers. After all, his mother died giving birth to the last brother. The inclusion of his parents is of significance here, because the dream does not just suggest that Joseph will be first among his brothers. It suggests Joseph's eventual prominence in the ancestral line, superseding even his parents in significance. This justifies the inclusion of family members living or dead.

Verse 12-36.

From the home base in the Valley of Hebron (37:14) Shechem is just over fifty miles, and Dothan is about 14 more. The journey would have taken Joseph four or five days. Joseph failed to find his brothers in verse 15-17.

Dothan, a large city, was occupied during this period. It is by the valley that cuts through the Carmel range, joining the coastal plains and the Jezreel Valley. Joseph's brothers seeing him coming and devise a devious plan. However Reuben is the only objector as he adopts part of their suggestion (the cistern) but seeks to avoid violence. Reuben responsibility as the oldest and wisest or it could be that he is seeking ways to regain his father's favor after the debacle of 35:22.

Dothan is on the normal caravan route from Gilead to Egypt (crossing at Bethshean, passing through the Harod Valley to Jezreel, then crossing through the Valley of Dothan to the coastal plains and then south to Egypt along the International Coastal Highway.

Cisterns: were either hollowed out of limestone bedrock or dug in the ground and lined with plaster. Since most of Israel's rainfall is confined to three or four months of the year, these cisterns collected rainwater and made it available during the dry period. It was not unusual during part of the year they were dry.

Midianites and Ishmaelites:

- Medianites are descendants of Abraham through Keturah (25:2) Medianites are the negotiators and buyers fronting for their Ishmaelite bosses, who provide them with capital.
- Ishmaelites are descendants of Abraham through Hagar, so both are kinfolk. So the Midianites do the business (37:28:36, while the goods belong to the Ishmaelites, who finance the caravan (37:25-28, 39:1)

The forebears of these two peoples were half-brothers to one another (and to Isaac), and so uncles to Jacob; therefore, these traders are second or third cousins to Joseph and his brothers. It is not unusual to find the two clans together since both occupy the Arabian desert region.

Joseph was sold for twenty shekels of silver was a typical sale price for slaves in this period and represents about two years' wages for a common shepherd. Jacob's household is fairly well-to-do, so the money is of little consequence to the brothers. By time they divide the money they won't have much to show for their treachery.

Application:

God's sovereignty:

When our plans don't go our way are we left feeling bitter towards God? We are not in a position to argue with God about why he sovereignly allows difficult things that come into our lives. Read Isaiah 45:9-10

Has there been a time in your life where you've seen God move you away from a reward?

As Christians, what are ways that we can try to have hope during difficult circumstances?

True belief in God's providence means that we can obey God's commandments without fear or anxiety because he has promised to work all things for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28).

God's timetable:

Has there been a time in your life when you felt ready for the next step but God said wait, or no?

What should our attitude and actions be like while we are waiting for God to bring our work or talents to fruition? *Our service to God is not just compromised of the end result of our life or ministry; it includes the process by which we get there.*

How can we be faithful while we are waiting on God? *God finds value in the effort of the journey.*

Lesson 14: Genesis 38- Judah and Tamar

What is this story doing right in the middle of the Joseph story?

This is an exercise in understanding how Moses used narratives to tell the story. There are various effects, tools, and devices he uses in this story to advance the broader story in Genesis. You just have to know how to look for them.

We won't get bogged down in this but it is interesting to see the connections from what appears at first to be a very disconnected story.

I am leaning on "The Art of Biblical Narrative" pp 3-12

Gen 37 ends with Joseph sold into slavery and Gen 39 picks up with Joseph as a slave.

Interplay of deception and recognition

Deception:

- Joseph's brothers deceive their father
- Tamar deceives Judah
- Potiphar's wife deceives Potiphar
- Joseph deceives his brothers

Recognition:

- Isaac recognizes the robe as Joseph's
- Judah recognizes his belongings
- Joseph is eventually exonerated
- Joseph's brothers recognize him, finally

Deception is not always a negative here:

- Tamar – she had been abused and abandoned. Judah was obligated to have one of his sons have children by her but she was left out and eventually had to go and stay with others. She taught him a lesson and through that – lineage of David via Perez via Judah!
- Joseph – he was teaching his brothers a lesson as well

Not condoning deception here...just like we weren't with Jacob. We see how God's purposes are carried out through imperfect people.

Genesis 39 – Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

God was watching over Joseph (39:2)

- Notice where this leads – it leads him directly into temptation.

Key point – the Lord being with you does not mean there will be no road blocks or opposition to holy living in your life. In fact, Satan may come at you even harder when God is really working through you.

Establishing Healthy Boundaries:

Joseph's perspective on the attempted seduction (Gen 39:7-10)

- He was not arrogant
- He was not self-serving
- He recognized that he should not think too highly of himself.

What might Joseph have said to himself to rationalize this affair?

- I have done a good job...I deserve this too

Why is it important to have healthy boundaries in our lives?

Why is it important to establish those before temptation? How?

Being punished for doing what is right:

Have you ever been punished for doing the right thing?

Again, God enters the picture (Gen 39:21)

Also, again Joseph gave this job his best. I am not sure if that would be my reaction to being in prison. I would probably be passive aggressive. I don't know if I would feel like helping my second set of captors. But Joseph did.

Rom 8:28 & Colossians 3:17 – doing everything in the name of the Lord.

If we recognize that in all things God is doing good, we will be more likely to do even the toughest things as best we can/in his name.

What does it mean to do something in the name of the Lord?

How can our lives and relationships reflect that concept that Joseph practiced even though Colossians wasn't even written yet!?!?

Genesis 40 – The Cupbearer and Baker

The patience of Joseph – he keeps getting forgotten (40:14-15 & 23)
He realized God was using him, even in prison.

God's providence and timing – Isa 40:30-31

There are times things don't go according to our planning but turn out better. If Joseph had been let out...he would not have gotten to interpret for Pharaoh.
Two more years in prison (41:1) = opportunity to be 2nd in command in Egypt.
Think those were two easy years? Nope.

Genesis 41 – Pharaoh's Dream

Inability of any other means of interpretation (magicians & "wise men" can't do it – 41:8)

Joseph's humility – 41:16

God is the only one who can. It will come through Joseph's lips but only because God does it. Joseph is completely dependent upon God to do this.

How dependent upon God are we today?

Why is it challenging to have the attitude of Joseph in depending on God?

Great opportunity came to Joseph because he trusted in the Lord

- James 4:10

What typically happens when we take control of our own lives and depend entirely on ourselves?

Why do we keep on doing that?

What areas of your life do you need to trust God more in?

What struggles do you have that might be your "two years in prison" like 41:1?

How does Joseph's story give you insight and build your faith to make it through that?

Lesson 15: Genesis 42 – First Trip to Egypt

The providence of God – God had lined everything up for them to meet again by giving Joseph the ability to interpret Pharaoh’s dream.

42:3 - 10 brothers:

- 12 brothers – Joseph (in Egypt) and Joseph’s brother...the youngest son Benjamin

42:7 – Joseph recognized them

- This goes back to the tie in with Gen 38 – recognition and cover up with Judah and Tamar
- Joseph recognizes them
- They don’t recognize him

What did he hope to accomplish by calling them spies?

42:9 – Joseph remembered his dream...God’s permission to be in charge of his brothers.

He is going to use his authority to:

- bring his family back together
- provide for them
- teach them a lesson in the meantime

42:11 – They plead that they are honest men...not spies

- Irony here
- Walton wonders if they had ever accused Joseph of being a spy for their father against them when he was young.

42:13 – they slip up by saying there are more brothers. They think Joseph is dead

Why do you think they don’t recognize Joseph when he is able to recognize them?

- Could be all the Egyptian jewelry, face paint, etc makes him hard to recognize

42:18-20 – Simeon is forced to stay behind (See 42:24, 36)

- Simeon was Leah and Jacob’s second child.
- Irony here – they must abandon one of their brothers and leave him behind

The reaction of the 9 to leaving Simeon behind (42:21-22)

- Reuben was firstborn of the brothers.
- Ironically his name sounds like “He has seen my misery” – pointing to Leah’s misery by not being loved by Jacob
- They think God is punishing them.

Does God punish people for making the wrong decisions? If so, how?

- Prov 3:11-12

God's discipline shows us he loves us.

How does/should discipline come out of love?

- Showing people boundaries – this is what healthy living looks like. Things outside of that tend to damage/hurt us and should be avoided. This has to be taught at some point.

What unhealthy emotions can discipline arise from?

42:24 – Simeon bound before their eyes...remind them of anything else? Maybe Joseph being trapped and sold into slavery?

Walton believes that Joseph may have wanted to see Benjamin in order to see if they had treated his only brother and the youngest one as he had been treated by them (p.678). Who knows.

Joseph's mercy – 42:25

Why do you think Joseph put the money back in their sacks?

- He wanted to provide for his family
- To make them nervous

At least that is what we can assume given that was the dual effect it had.

42:29-35 – Their retelling of the events to their father Jacob

Jacob's reaction – 42:36

Why did he say "Simeon is no more"?

- He knew they couldn't go back because of the silver in the bags.
- He was as good as dead

Why does Jacob say Benjamin is the "only one left? When there are 9 other brothers not counting Simeon?

- Rachel only had two sons – Joseph and Benjamin
- This is probably why Joseph was so adamant about Benjamin coming – they had the same mother
- Joseph also knew his dad's heart was close to Benjamin and that might bring Jacob to Egypt

Notice in 43:1-2 – they used up all the food and still had not returned to Egypt

- Simeon is still in Egypt!

Genesis 43 – Return to Egypt

Fear and God's providence

What made the events of this chapter fearful/scary?

What kinds of things do we do in life to try to manage our fears and make provision for them or keep them at bay?

At the end of the day it is all on God...it all depends on him to come through and not anything we can provide for ourselves.

What efforts did they take to make things right with "the governor"/Joseph?

What was Joseph's reaction to them?

Why do you think he set them in order around the table by age?

Why did Benjamin get the largest portion?

Genesis 44 – Joseph Ups the Ante

Joseph sets them up for the worst case scenario – just when they were relieved to be going home with Simeon and Benjamin...they find the silver cup Joseph had planted in their bags.

- Walton believes this is a test to see if they will abandon another brother
- How will they respond to this news about Benjamin?

44:17 – Joseph knew how much this would hurt them and their father...he is really testing them and making a profound point.

44:28 – now who is getting figuratively "torn to pieces"?

The cup

- Walton makes an astute observation. He is using the cup to discern what he needs to know...just not in a mystical kind of way
- The cup serves as a test that will tell him the things he needs to know about them
 - Have they changed?
 - How will they respond?
 - How will they treat Benjamin? Like they left Simeon?

44:28 – Joseph finally hears what his father thinks happened to him. Jacob thinks he is dead

Passing the test (44:34)

- *What was it about Judah's speech that caused Joseph to break down and reveal himself?*

- *How had Judah changed from who we saw in 37:26 and Gen 38?*
- *Why was that what Joseph was looking for?*

All Joseph had been doing had worked...they had a change of heart.

Application:

What is God looking for in our lives?

What is He willing to do to make that happen?

How are we to respond?

Lesson 16: Genesis 45-47

Joseph reveals himself (45:1-15):

First two things he says:

- I am Joseph
- Is my father living?

Walton points out that the second statement seems odd as they have told him their father is well but now Joseph is making it personal – he is no longer a stranger to them... Walton points out he is really asking not just if he is alive but if Jacob is well (p.682)

How is “Is my father living/well?” is a different question than “Is your father living/well?”

Why do his brothers respond the way they do?

God’s divine plan – 45:5-11

- *How many times does Joseph mention God in these verses?*
- *Why so many?*
- *What was God’s plan?*
- *What did it take for it to happen?*
- *How did Joseph react to all God did in his life or allowed to happen in his life?*
- *How should we respond to God’s working in our lives?*

Romans 8:28 – mentioned it several times in class because it fits so well with the Joseph story.

- *How have you seen God work good out of difficult situations in your life?*

Reminded of God’s wisdom – God knew there would be a famine and made provision for people to be protected through it.

Sometimes we act like God is even surprised by events. God already knows.

Is every single thing that happens the will of God or caused by God?

How do you fit together God’s sovereignty with things taking place that He didn’t cause?

The plan (Gen 45:16-24):

Emphasis given to the best of the land:

- Pharaoh wants them to have the best
- Joseph will settle them in Goshen - one of the best places to live, see 47:5-6, 11
- (they still lived there in Exodus see Exo 8:22 and were spared the plagues there)

God takes bad stuff and makes it good:

- Joseph sold and made head over Egypt

- Famine comes and Egypt and Joseph's family prosper
- Jacob thinks his son is dead and that he will lose Simeon and Benjamin too...but they get the choice land in Egypt and a bunch of blessings

God has a way of doing that.

I don't normally like to ask questions like this one but it helps us make sense of one thing Joseph said - *What do you think the brothers were thinking as they left Egypt again with a pile of silver, clothes, an escort, carts, animals, etc?*

- Here we go again...get ready to be attacked, accused, put in prison for stealing, etc!
- *Does that explain why Joseph told them not to quarrel? (which can also mean "don't be troubled?")* (see Walton, 683)

Return home with the news (Gen 45:25-28):

How did Jacob react to the news Joseph was alive?

What did it take for him to believe it?

Notice what this did for Jacob (who lived to be 147 – see 47:28). He had the strength to go and see his son.

Genesis 46 – Jacob Goes to Egypt

Walton mentions that when the patriarchs enter and leave Canaan that they are often met with theophanies (visions of the divine/angelic beings, etc – See 28:10, 31:11, 32:1 and Gen 35). See Walton, 683

Why did God assure Jacob that his family would return?

- Part of the covenant – Gen 15:13

Remember who wrote Genesis and who the first audience was – Moses wrote Genesis and presumably the first audience were those coming out of captivity in Egypt. This is their story. This shows them that God has been a part of this journey from Day 1 and that God knew exactly what was going to happen, for how long, etc

Does it give you any confidence that God knows what the future holds? Why?

46:30 – Jacob is now ready to die as he has seen his son.

Do you ever feel like people hang on until something is done or a certain person is there?

This is also proof to Jacob that what God told him is true (from 46:3-4) your son really is alive (46:4) and so the rest of the promise is true too – that they won't be in Egypt forever but will return.

Getting Goshen (46:31-47:12)

- Egyptian attitude toward herders opened the door for them to live near the delta where they had good land to pasture their flocks.
- See Walton, 686-687 for a very interesting discussion on why Joseph may have said what he said in 46:31-34

They got the choice land because the world didn't want anything to do with them. *How can we relate to that as Christians?*

How do we find our place in the world but not of it?

Why do we need each other's support/how do we support each other in a world not friendly to our faith?

Genesis 47 – Joseph's Handling the Famine

More provision for God's people? (47:16)

- Hebrews were shepherds...makes sense that they took care of their flocks and maybe some other flocks as well...could these animals then have gone to the people who knew how to shepherd them?
- 20% tax – Walton says this was low during this period of time = merciful on Joseph's part

All of this showed that God's plan was true in regard to the famine. God used Jacob to bless many nations. While this seems harsh it was merciful and saved the lives of many (See 47:25). This also reminds us of the promise to Abraham – many nations will be blessed through him.

Jacob's request:

- Vow with hand under thigh – common and found in other places in the Bible
- Wanted to be buried back home: See Gen 49:29ff & 50:12 he was taken home & buried
- Joseph would also be buried at home 400 years later (Joshua 24:28ff)
- Gathered with his fathers – physical (his bones with theirs) and spiritual (life after death implications)

Application:

- How we live really matters – we won't always get it right but it is important that we are willing to do better in the areas we have messed up.
- *How does the change in Joseph's brothers help us see the need to change troubled areas in our lives?*
- *What encouragement do you need right now as maybe you are in a place in life that isn't yet Goshen?*

Lesson 17: Genesis 48 – Manasseh & Ephraim

Making sense of what Jacob is doing here:

- Rachel died without giving Jacob as many kids as he would have liked.
- Jacob is adopting Ephraim and Manasseh as his children through Rachel
- Who are they replacing?
 - He mentions Simeon and Reuben
 - They are his first and second born children
 - So he is saying that Manasseh and Ephraim will be just as much his children as his first and second born.
- He does this based on two things:
 - The legal rights of someone to carry on the lineage for those who have died
 - The covenant promises made to Jacob at Luz
- According to Walton the effect is that Joseph gets the double portion of the inheritance just as Judah would have (p.711)
 - He gets his normal amount
 - The amount that comes through his two kids, now Jacob's
 - He gets the land mentioned in 48:22

48:8 – “Whose are these”

- Walton points out that it is not that he doesn't know who they are
- This is the beginning of passing on the blessing...much like in a wedding, “Who gives this woman...” (p.711)

48:9 – Jacob's response shows that they are eligible to be adopted by Jacob.

The younger favored over the older:

- Ephraim over Manasseh
- Jacob over Esau
- Joseph over his brothers
- Why?
 - Walton believes it is about grace...those who least expect the blessing get it

Unexpected blessing

- *Do you remember a time you received an unexpected blessing?*
- *How did that make you feel?*
- *What do those things teach us about God?*

Blessing our children:

- Church + Home is a program by Mark Holman that involves incorporating spiritual activities into the home and letting what happens in the home to be supported by the congregation.
- Content of Jacob's blessing in 48:15-16
- *How do we instill in our children a desire for God?*
- *How do we instill in them a God-centered life?*

- Someone must cast the vision!

12 tribes:

1. Manasseh (Joseph's)
2. Asher
3. Zebulun
4. Judah
5. Naphtali
6. Issachar
7. Dan
8. Benjamin
9. Gad
10. Ephraim (Joseph's)
11. Simeon
12. Reuben

Not tribes:

- Joseph – his two sons became Jacob's sons
- Levi – not given a territory as they became the priests and got allotment in each place and provision

Genesis 49 – Jacob's Blessing

Walton points out that these blessings are not really prophetic/authoritative in the sense that all things within them must come true. These are a pronouncement of a father's wishes upon his children (p.712-713).

Walton also points out there are many words in this chapter used only here and there are many translational difficulties.

Reuben (49:3-4):

- Defiled his father's bed (See Gen 35:22 when Jacob was mourning Rachel's death Reuben slept with Bilhah his father's concubine)

Simeon (49:5-7):

- Genesis 34:25 – Simeon and Judah were the two who attacked Shechem after they defiled their sister Dinah.
- Scattered & Dispersed (49:7)
 - Judah gets no tribe
 - Simeon gets some dispersed villages within Judah

Judah (49:8-12):

- 49:9 – Judah is a lion (See Rev 5:5 as Jesus is called the Lion of Judah)
- 49:10 – may be a messianic prophesy

Zebulun (49:13):

- Never quite ended up by the seashore...they were landlocked.
- Remember, these are not specific authoritative prophesies.

Isaachar (49:14-15):

- Saddlebags can refer to the two mountain ranges that were on either side of their territory with the Jezreel Valley in between (Walton, 716)
- It was a very fertile place and a trade route...so defending it would be a constant chore

Dan (49:16-18):

- Unclear on this one
- Walton has some interesting information on how little the name of God is used in the Joseph story (Just in 38 and 39).

Gad (49:19):

- Little on this one

Asher (49:20):

- Little on this one

Naphtali (49:21):

- Little on this one

Joseph (49:22-26):

- Notice he is paired with his brother
- It seems that Jacob is putting him over his brothers, just as God had told Joseph in his dreams and had done through his time in Egypt
- However, Judah will eventually be the leader (Walton, 719)

Benjamin (49:27):

- Not much there

49:28 – these are a forecast not just for these kids but for the tribes themselves.

Genesis 50 – The End of Joseph’s Life

The Death of Jacob (49:29-50:14)

- Gathered to his fathers – burial practices (physical) and spiritual
- Embalmed him – remember he is in Egypt!
- God made good on his promises to Jacob

What implications might Jacob’s death have on the remaining children as we see in 50:15ff?

How did Joseph handle that situation?

Who is Joseph focused on?

See Esther 4:14

Have you ever been in the right place at right time to help someone? (Taco story at Shands)

Death of Joseph

Seems odd that Joseph, the youngest, is talking to his brothers about his death at 110 years old! He uses that to lay out the covenant promises again.

Application:

At pivotal times the covenant promises of God keep coming up again.

Why is it important to remember God's promises at key times/pivotal times in our lives?

What promises has God made to us today?

- Salvation from sin
- Great reward
- All spiritual blessing
- Life to the full
- Joy and peace
- Eternal life
- Many, many more

When times get tough, it is important that we retell these promises to ourselves, our families, our friends.