

# ADULTS



**"Thy word is a lamp to my feet,  
and a light to my path."**

**Psalm 119:105**

## SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY LESSONS

*File in AT 2-3*

Africa Coordinated Curriculum for Bible Study

# **SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY LESSONS FOR ADULTS**

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## **THEME:**

**GOD'S PLAN IN ACTION  
THROUGH PEOPLE HE MADE**

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**BIBLE STUDY LESSONS FOR ADULTS**  
**GOD'S PLAN IN ACTION THROUGH**  
**THE PEOPLE HE MADE (A Study in Genesis)**

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## MADE IN HIS IMAGE

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME: Genesis 1 - 2

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

Genesis 1:26,27,31; Genesis 2:7, 18-25

MEMORY VERSE:

*"Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7).*

Genesis is called the book of beginnings. It tells us about the beginning of all things. This beginning is called creation. The one who created things was God. We know that God did not have a beginning. He has always been. He was there before he created anything.

Creation means making something new and different out of nothing. We make bread out of flour. But that is not creating anything. God used just his own power to make the world and everything in it out of nothing. He spoke and things happened.

God made everything according to his plan. People today who study science are amazed at the way God planned the world and made things in it. In Genesis 1:31 we read that God looked at what he had made and saw that it was very good. We also can see the beauty of God's world. When we plant seeds and then reap a harvest we can see God's good plan for his earth.

Now read about how God made man.

#### **MAN CREATED BY GOD (Read Genesis 1:26,27)**

These verses tell us that God made man. Genesis 2:7 tells us that God used dust to make man. The Bible does not tell us the exact plan which God used. We do not need to know that. We only need to know who made us and why he made us.

God said "Let us make man." People wonder who God was talking to when he said "us". In the New Testament we read that Jesus made the world. (Read John 1:3, 10; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2). In John 1:4 we read that in Jesus there is life. In Psalms 104:30 we read, "When thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created...". Thus we see that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit worked as One to create man.

#### **MAN MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE**

God said he would make man in his image. The word image means something that is made like another thing. Man was God's only creation that was made in his image. "In our image" does not mean that man's body looked like God. Man is like God in other ways. God made man to be a person who could be his friend. Man can think. He can choose what he wants to do. He can feel in his heart the desire to know God and respond to God. Only man has the ability to reject God if he so chooses. God made us in his image so that we would respond to him in love. Read Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24 to see how this "image of God" becomes a reality in sinful man today.

## MAN'S DOMINION OVER GOD'S CREATION

(Read verse 26 again). "Dominion means to have power over another thing or to rule over it. God gave to mankind the responsibility to rule over and care for the world. Man is supposed to take the things he needs from the earth and from the animals.

But man is also supposed to do this in the right way. He should not ruin the fields. He should not kill all the plants when he grazes his animals. He should not kill a wild animal just to get its skin to sell. If man ruins the earth, he will also ruin his own life. And he will ruin the earth for his children. They will not have their rightful heritage that God planned for them to have.

## THE BREATH OF LIFE: Read Genesis 2:7

Genesis 2:7 says that God FORMED man's body from dust. Next God BREATHED his own life into man. Then man BECAME a living soul. This breath of life from God is what makes man different from animals. Other creatures are also alive. But only man has life that came from God. When an animal dies, that is the end of its existence. But since man is a living soul, he will never die.

Man can choose how he will live. Some men choose to live their lives without faith in Jesus Christ. Others choose Jesus and live with God. After man's body dies, those who have lived with God will be with God for eternity. Those who left God out of their lives will not be with God, yet their souls will not be dead. They will be miserable and will suffer in hell forever and ever.

## **GOD GAVE MAN A HELPMET: Read Genesis 2:18-25**

God gave man the work of naming all the animals. Man was very busy. Though he enjoyed the animals, man was lonely and incomplete. So God made a woman for man. She was made to be man's companion. God made her from Adam's own flesh. Then God gave her to Adam. Adam was very happy when he saw Eve. He had someone who was like himself, someone God made just for him.

Adam and Eve stayed together. They made the first home. God blessed Adam and Eve. He told them to have children. "And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it..." (Genesis 1:28). He told them to be one flesh. God intended for Adam and Eve to plan together and to meet the needs of each other. God said man should leave his parents and stay with his wife. It was God's plan for one man and one woman to make their home and stay together for all their lives. Only death should end their marriage.

God made the first home many years before he made the first church. The home is important to God. This is where the parents are to teach their children. When parents do not do this work, the world is spoiled. A nation cannot be strong without good homes. The world will not be a good place to live.

## **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT**

God created a good world. Man was created with a desire to know his Creator. He was given a companion, a wife. He was given a home to come to when he was tired or lonely. Adam was given work to do. He named the animals. The earth and the

animals belonged to him. God's creation was good.

Do you show by your life that you were created in God's image? Do you follow God's plan for your life? Do you have fellowship with God each day through Christ? Do you properly care for the wealth and the things in the world God has entrusted to you? Do you see your wife or husband as being one with you in making your home? Do you read and study the Bible to know how God wants you to make your home?

### WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. Everything God created was good.
2. God created man in his image to fellowship with him.
3. God gave man work to do.
4. God made man different from other creatures.
5. God gave man a mate, and together they made the first home.
6. God wants to have fellowship with man as man follows God's plan through Jesus Christ.

## LESSON 2

# FREE, BUT ACCOUNTABLE

### SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME:

Genesis 2:15-17; 3

### SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

Genesis 2:15-17: 3:1-13, 23

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God"*  
(1 Peter 2:16).

Free, but accountable means that man has been given the freedom to choose how he will live. But man will be judged. He must give an answer to God for what he does. Man is accountable to God for his choices.

We studied last week about the creation of the world. God made everything. He made man in his image with a desire to know God. God gave man work to do and gave him a helper. All of God's creation was good. Today we will see what Adam and Eve did in God's good world.

### THE BEAUTIFUL GARDEN: Read Genesis 2:15-17

It was God's plan for Adam and Eve to have a good place to live. He made a beautiful garden and gave it to them for their home. They could get their food from the garden. Also, they were supposed to care for the garden. In Genesis 2:25 we read that Adam and Eve did not know shame. They were happy in the good home God had given them.

In the garden there was everything Adam and Eve needed. They could eat the fruit

from every tree except one. That tree was called the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" God told Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate fruit from this tree. It seems that at first Adam and Eve were happy to obey God and to live and work in their beautiful garden home. At first they accepted God's plan for them and trusted God.

### **SATAN TEMPTED EVE TO SIN**

One day a beautiful serpent came to Eve. The serpent allowed Satan to use its body to spread Satan's lies and tricks. Satan, the enemy of God, wanted to ruin Adam's and Eve's good life in the garden. He knew that Adam and Eve trusted and obeyed God. The serpent knew that he could ruin God's good creation if he could make Adam and Eve doubt God. He wanted to destroy their trust in God.

So the serpent asked Eve a question. (Read Genesis 3:1-3). Eve innocently answered the serpent. She had no warning that the serpent wanted to trick her. Then the serpent lied to Eve. He said that eating the fruit would not bring death. Satan promised Eve that she would become like God and would know evil as well as good when she ate the forbidden fruit.

### **ADAM AND EVE SINNED**

Eve listened to Satan. She looked at the tree and saw that it looked good. She began to doubt that what God had said was true. She began to believe that God had denied her something good. Because her trust in God was gone, she made the wrong choice. Eve rejected God's plan. She allowed her own thoughts to guide her in her choice. Eve ate the fruit. Then she gave some to

Adam. Adam ate also. Sin came into the beautiful garden, and God's plan was ruined.

#### **IMMEDIATE RESULTS OF THEIR SIN**

As soon as Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they knew that they had sinned. They felt guilty and ashamed. They now knew evil as well as good. That part of Satan's claim was true. But as knowledge of sin came into their lives, Adam and Eve also knew fear. They recognised that they were naked. Their bodies lacked cover. Their souls lacked fellowship with God because they became dead in sin. They sewed leaves to make clothes. But nothing they could do would take away the fear and broken fellowship with God.

#### **ADAM AND EVE MET GOD**

Genesis 3:8-10 tells us about God's meeting with Adam and Eve. It seems that God often walked in the garden and visited with them. Before they sinned, Adam and Eve had met God with trust and happiness. Now they were afraid to meet God. They were ashamed. When they heard God coming, Adam and Eve hid.

"Where are you?" asked God.

Adam and Eve stood before God. They told God about their shame and their fear. The Lord God must have felt sorrow because he could no longer fellowship with Adam and Eve. Sin had put a wall between God and man.

#### **ADAM AND EVE WERE GUILTY**

As God tried to get Adam and Eve to admit their sin, they tried to put the blame on someone else. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. But each of them knew

that he was guilty. God did not excuse any of them. Each had to be punished. Creation was spoiled. Evil had been chosen by mankind.

#### **ADAM AND EVE WERE PUNISHED: Read Genesis 3:23**

The remaining verses in Genesis 3 tell us about the punishment God gave. The serpent was made to crawl in the dust because he allowed Satan to use him. Eve would have to bear children in pain. She would be subject to her husband. Adam would have to sweat and toil for his food. They would have to die physically some day. And since they were spiritually dead, they were sent out of the beautiful garden. They were separated from God and would not be able to visit with God any more in the cool evening.

#### **GOD'S PLAN FOR MAN'S REDEMPTION**

In Genesis 3:9 we find God seeking sinful man who had hid from him. God still seeks sinful man today.

In Genesis 3:21 we read that God used animal skins to make clothes for Adam and Eve. He first had to kill the animal to get the skins. The innocent animal had to shed its blood so that guilty man could be covered.

In the same way God had a plan to forgive all sinful men and restore them to fellowship with God. Genesis 3:15 predicts that God would send a Saviour who would defeat Satan and conquer sin. This Saviour is Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God, who shed his blood to cover us with righteousness.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Even today Satan comes to us when we are not expecting to be tricked. He tempts us to doubt God and rebel against God and his plan for us. He lies and tells us that sin is beautiful and something to be desired. He tells us that we will not be punished. No one will know. We inherit this opportunity to choose wrong from Adam and Eve. Satan does not want us to follow God's plan for living. He works hard to make us choose wrong. Jesus gave us a way to get rid of sin. If we repent of our sin and confess it to him, he will remove the wall between us and God. If we put our faith in Jesus, we can fellowship with God again, both here on earth and in heaven for eternity. If we are in fellowship with God, he will tell us when Satan is trying to trick us. Then we can choose to obey. We can choose the right way.

## WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. God made each person free to choose what he will do. Each of us can choose to obey God or we can choose to sin.
2. We do not have to sin. God wants us to choose to obey him. God will give us victory over temptation.
3. Satan tempts us to disobey God. We must beware of Satan's temptations.
4. Each person is responsible to God for what he does and for the choice he makes. Sin will be punished.
5. God provided a way for our sins to be covered when he sent Jesus Christ to die for us.

## Lesson 3

# MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

**SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME:** Genesis 4

**SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON:** Genesis 4:1-15

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"If any one says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, and cannot love God whom he has not seen"*  
(1 John 4:20).

Adam and Eve disobeyed God and had to leave their beautiful garden home. Now they had to work hard to get food. They were sometimes sick. How sad they were that they had rebelled against God's plan for them.

In today's lesson we shall see that one of their children, Cain, also chose to rebel against God's way. He chose the way of jealousy, anger, hatred and murder. He rejected God's way of love and caring about his brother.

### ADAM'S FAMILY GROWS: Read Genesis 4:1-10

Adam and Eve had been told by God to be "fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it..." (Genesis 1:28). They must have known great joy when children came into their home. Eve recognized that these sons were a blessing from God. When Cain was born, Eve said, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD." Adam and Eve must have told their children the story of the beautiful garden. And they told Cain and Abel about the Lord. Adam taught the boys about their work of caring for the earth. Abel became a shepherd. Cain became

a farmer.

### CAIN'S AND ABEL'S INHERITANCE

Cain and Abel inherited their physical bodies from Adam and Eve. They also inherited sinful natures. They inherited a spirit that needed fellowship with God. They had a desire to worship God. Yet their sin hindered their fellowship and their worship.

It seems that from the time of the first sin, God made it known that he desired to have man approach him with a blood sacrifice to atone for man's sins. Hebrews 9:22 says, "... without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins"

Cain and Abel also inherited the ability to choose whether they would obey God's plan or not.

### CAIN'S AND ABEL'S OFFERING TO GOD verses 3,4

Cain and Abel both decided to bring offerings to the Lord. Cain decided to come to God in his own way, not in God's way. The fruit he brought was probably his very best. But it was not what God required. Cain's attitude was not right. He rebelled against God's way. His worship was a mere formal act without faith and obedience. He did not come to God in repentance, faith or in love. Therefore God rejected him and his offering.

Abel realized that he was a sinner. He was sorry for his sin. Therefore he chose a perfect lamb to give as his offering to God. He humbly offered the lamb in sacrifice for this sin. He came to God in the way God had set forth. He showed his faith in God by obeying him. Hebrews 11:4 says, "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain..."

Therefore God accepted Abel and his offering.

God loved both Cain and Abel. Both men knew what God required. But only Abel chose to obey God.

#### **CAIN'S REACTION TO HIS REJECTION BY GOD verses 5-7**

As soon as God rejected Cain's offering and accepted Abel's, the sin of pride that had been crouching at Cain's door showed itself in anger and jealousy. God tried to help him see that the reason his offering had been rejected was because he had not done right. God warned him of the need to master the sin before it mastered him.

Cain's heart had not been cleansed through obedient worship. Therefore he had no power to master the sin that was growing in him.

#### **THE RESULTS OF JEALOUSY: Anger and Hatred -- Murder verse 8**

Cain's anger and jealousy grew until he rose up against his brother and murdered him. Why did he murder him? 1 John 3:12 tells us that we should "not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil and his brother's righteous".

The murder happened because Cain's heart was not right with God.

#### **CAIN REFUSES TO ADMIT HIS SIN verses 9, 10**

God asked Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" God knew what Cain had done. He knew where Abel was. But God was trying to get Cain to admit his sin and repent of it.

Cain answered God's question with a lie. He refused to admit what he had done. He refused to accept any responsibility for

his brother.

Jehovah God let Cain know that he sees everything. He knows our sin. He can hear the cries of those we have wronged. Sin must be punished.

#### **CAIN'S PUNISHMENT: Genesis 4:12-16**

When Adam and Eve sinned they were sent away from the garden. When Cain sinned he was sent away from his home. God told him that he would be a fugitive and a wanderer. Cain could no longer farm. He would not have a home. He feared for his life as he wandered among strangers.

And Cain said, "and from thy face I shall be hidden" (verse 14). That was the worst punishment of all. He was responsible for his actions. He should have followed God's plan and not his own. Cain never asked God to forgive him. Therefore he "went away from the presence of the LORD" (verse 16). Sin always brings separation from God.

#### **GOD'S MERCY ON CAIN**

When Cain began to wander, God put a mark on him so that people would recognize him. Then they would not kill him. God still loved Cain and wanted to protect him. We do not know what the mark on Cain was. It may have been like a tribal marking. The important thing for us to learn here is about God's love and mercy.

Again we have a sad ending to our story. Adam and Eve had lost Abel. Now Cain was driven far away. Their joy in their children was replaced by sorrow. But God remembered them and gave them Seth. That part of their sad story brings happiness.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Our love for God and our brother are closely connected. If we are out of fellowship with God, our relationship with others will be hindered. Likewise, if we do not love our brother, we cannot be in fellowship with God. Sin mars both relationships.

Let us ask ourselves: What motivates my thoughts and actions towards others? Is it envy or hatred? Or is it Christian love? Does my worship of God result in genuine concern for others and for their needs?

We are our brother's keeper. If we truly love God, we shall show our love by serving others in his name. We shall lay aside our selfishness and jealousy. We shall look for those who have needs and we shall help them. Some need food and clothes. Others need to be told of God's love in Christ. They all need our love. They are our brothers. We are responsible to God for them.

## WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. In order to worship God, we must come to him in faith and obedience.
2. We cannot worship God if we have bad feelings toward someone or if we have unconfessed sins in our lives.
3. God sees our sin and calls us to admit it and forsake it.
4. If we do not repent, we must suffer for our sin.
5. Sin always brings separation from God.
6. We are responsible for helping those in need around us. We are our brother's keeper.

## A MAN IN GOD'S PLAN

### SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME:

Genesis 6:1 to 9:17

### SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

Genesis 6:11-14 17-22; 9:12-16

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household" (Hebrews 11:7).*

A young man from West Africa had a dramatic experience with the living God when he truly met Jesus and surrendered his all to him. Before this experience, he had pretended to be a Christian. Yet all the while he was stealing, lying and engaging in all forms of sin. God spoke to him through the Word concerning the need to change his own life and preach to his fellow students. He was given a gift of the Holy Spirit to know the particular sins of the others and to point them toward repentance. Although his life was threatened, he continued to obey God.

Would you be willing to obey God if people ridiculed you and even threatened to kill you? In Genesis 6-10 we read of Noah who followed God's plan for him in very wicked times. Noah trusted God and obeyed even though he was ridiculed. Let us learn about Noah today.

### SIN BROUGHT DEATH: Read Genesis 6:11-13.

Many years passed after God created the world and everything in it. People multiplied. Most of these people forgot

about God. They were corrupt and thought only of themselves.

Genesis 6:5 says, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

God had created man to fellowship with him. Man had knowledge of good and evil. Man could choose his way. Time after time man chose the wrong way. God began to be sorry he had made man. He decided to "blot out" man. God decided to destroy all living things from the face of the ground. Sin and evil brought death to the wicked men of those days.

#### NOAH FOUND FAVOUR

In all of this sin and evil, the Lord found one man who was righteous. This man believed God. He was ready to obey God. We read, "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). This is an amazing thing. Even though all of the people around Noah were following their own violent desires and pleasing only themselves, Noah "walked with God".

The Bible tells us that Noah was a husband and father. Noah taught his sons about God. He led his family in worshipping God. Noah was ready to bring his possessions to God for an offering.

In 2 Peter 2:5 we read that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness". Noah tried to warn his neighbours to leave their evil ways and follow God's way of love. But we know that no one listened to Noah. They must have laughed at this good man who had the courage to do what was right when everyone around him was doing wrong.

## **GOD PLANNED A WAY TO BE SAVED: Genesis 6:14-22**

Noah walked and talked with God. Therefore God told Noah all of his plans. He told Noah what he was going to do to cleanse the world of evil. Noah had a part in this plan. God promised Noah that he and his family would not be destroyed. God told Noah what to do to be saved. God promised Noah that he would save two of every kind of animal. The earth would be new and clean after the flood.

## **NOAH FOLLOWED GOD'S PLAN**

Noah was given a lot of hard work to do. Noah must have been filled with sorrow to know that all of his neighbours would be destroyed. But we know that they did not listen to his warning. Perhaps they teased and mocked Noah as he began to build his huge boat. Noah was busy doing everything God had told him to do.

The land was dry as Noah and his sons went out to cut trees. The land was still dry when the ark was finished and the animals and food were safe inside. Up until that day, the earth had been watered by mists. There had never been rain. (See Genesis 2:5,6).

When all was ready, Noah and his family went into the ark. They believed God's promise of safety. They believed the rain would come. They believed the dry land would be covered with water. When they were inside, God shut the door of the ark. "And they that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in" (Genesis 7:16). No one could come out. No one else could go in.

## THE FLOOD: Genesis 7:6-24

The people must have been afraid when the storm clouds gathered and great drops of rain began to fall. They began to wonder if Noah had spoken the truth. They began to wish that they had believed God. Their wicked desires became less important as the water began to rise. But it was too late.

The rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights. The windows of the heavens were opened until even the high mountains were covered with water. "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth..." (Genesis 7:21). All the evil was gone.

But Noah and his family were safe in the ark. They were busy caring for the animals. They had to wait a long time for the earth to be dry again. Then God told them to leave the ark. God began the world again with a man who trusted and obeyed him.

Even today scientists find evidence that there was once a terrible flood on the earth. And the folktales of ancient people from around the world tell of the time when the world was destroyed with water.

But the people of the world seem much the same. They still have the right to choose their way. They have chosen evil ways that do not please God. They have devised many different ways to try to please God. But very few believe that by accepting Jesus as the only way to God and believing in him, they will be saved. They still do not believe the preaching of God's word.

Like Noah, we must preach whether people believe or not. We must walk with God. We must tell our neighbours about God's love in Christ Jesus. We must tell them about the coming judgement upon all who reject Jesus Christ.

## **GOD MADE A COVENANT: Read 9:12-16**

The flood was over. It was time to go forth and begin again. Noah was glad to be alive. He was thankful for his family's safety. He was glad that God made a covenant to save him. He was glad that he had obeyed God. Noah thanked God for saving him by giving him a sacrifice in worship.

God made a new covenant or agreement with Noah and with every living creature. He told Noah that he would never again destroy the world with water. God gave Noah a sign by which Noah could remember his promise. The sign of the covenant could be seen by all living things. It would be a reminder that God would keep his promise. This sign was a rainbow. It would appear in the sky after a rain. It would mean that God would not destroy the world again with a flood.

## **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT**

Let us think about some of the things Noah did. Noah taught his children about God. We as Christians have the same responsibility. Noah was an example before his family. We are to be examples of the kind of person God wants us to be. Our children should be able to trust us, and come to us with their problems.

Noah was willing to be a different kind of person. He believed God and obeyed him. He was righteous when everyone around him was evil. Not one of his neighbours agreed with him, but Noah knew that God ruled everything. His neighbours could not even rule their households well. So Noah trusted and followed God. Are we different from the world around us? Do we stand true to Christ even if our neighbours ridicule us?

Noah gave back to God some of his

possessions. When he came out of the ark, much of his food had been consumed. But he trusted God to care for him so he gave part of his possessions to God in thanks. Do we show our trust in God by bringing our tithes and offerings to him?

#### WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. Trusting and obeying God brings life. Trusting ourselves and being ruled by sin brings death.
2. God has a plan for each person. Those who believe God and obey him can find out and do God's plan.
3. God will keep his promises. God will never break his word.
4. God wants us to be trustworthy also. He wants to keep our promises.
5. God must in justice punish sin. But he always seeks a way to show his mercy.

## Lesson 5

# GOING WHERE GOD LEADS

**SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME:** Genesis 11:26 to  
Genesis 12:20

**SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON:** Genesis 12:1-9

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go" (Hebrews 11:8).*

God has a plan for each person. He calls us in many different ways to do many different things. There is a certain man who lives in Africa. He has heard the call of God many times and is an obedient child of God. In the middle of one night he seemed to hear God's call again urging him to get up and drive down the road. But why? And where was he to go? He did not know. But he recognized that God was speaking.

The man of God quickly put on his clothes and started driving away from his house on a hilly road. God suddenly seemed to tell him to slow down, to go very slowly as he topped a hill. Just over the hill he saw a man lying on the road. The man had been hit by a car and left there to die. The man of God took the seriously injured man to the hospital where he became well.

What would have happened if the man of God had not listened to the call of God and obeyed quickly? The injured man would most likely have been killed by the next speeding car on the road. God was concerned about the life of just one man and sent his servant to save his life.

Often we think of God as being very far off. It is hard to realize that God still speaks to people today just as he did in the days of the Bible. Yet God has not changed! A boy in Malawi felt God calling him to go to university in America. He had no money. Yet he followed God's leadership and walked over 2,500 miles to North Africa. There, three years later, a way was found to go to America and finish university. He obeyed the call of God not knowing how God would provide the way.

Two thousand years before Jesus was born, God spoke to a man named Abram. Abram lived among pagan people who worshipped many idols. These people had wrongly used their freedom by choosing to worship false gods. However, Jehovah God had a plan to bring salvation to mankind. It would take many years. But God's plan of salvation had a beginning. Abram was part of God's plan. When God called Abram, Abram agreed to follow God's plan.

#### **GOD CALLED ABRAM: Read Genesis 12:1-9**

The Bible does not tell us how Abram knew about Jehovah. Genesis 11 tells us that he was descended from Shem, one of Noah's sons. Most likely each father taught his sons and they taught their sons about Jehovah God. It must have been in this way that Abram knew about Jehovah. When God was ready to begin his plan of redemption, he spoke to Abram.

In verse 1 Abram was told to do some difficult things. He was told to leave his country. He was to leave his kindred, and he was to leave his father's house. This was a hard thing. The poorest man in Africa is one who has no family near. Yet God's call is always to leave the world and be

separated unto God.

God did not tell Abram where he was to go. Abram was told to begin his journey. The Lord promised to lead and guide him. Can you think what it must have been like when Abram told his wife and servants to prepare for a journey? Without doubt everyone wanted to know where they were going. Abram could only answer, "I do not know. God will show me later." Abram trusted God. Abram obeyed God.

#### **GOD'S PROMISES TO ABRAM: verses 2,3**

God promised Abram many things if he would obey God's command. God told Abram that he would do five things:

1. Make a great nation of Abram's family.
2. Bless Abram. He would protect and help him.
3. Make Abram's name great.
4. Use Abram to bless other people. This referred to the fact that God would use Abram and his family to bring salvation to mankind.
5. Bless people who blessed Abram. Also he would curse any who cursed Abram.

#### **ABRAM OBEYED GOD: verses 4-6**

Abram had freedom to choose. He could have stayed at home. He would have felt safe with his family around him. He would have lived his life and died and we would never have heard of him. Abram would have missed God's blessing. He would have had only the kind of life he planned for himself.

But Abram obeyed God. Abram's nephew, Lot, went with him. Sarai his wife went too. All of Abram's servants went. Abram

took his herds and all his possessions. But he could not take the land. He could not take a place to plant his seeds. He was trusting God to care for him.

Abram began his journey. They had to move slowly as they walked along. Probably they had tents tied on the backs of the animals. They had to look for water and grass for the animals. Sometimes they had to buy food from the people who lived in the land through which they passed. And all the time Abram moved on because God had not told him to stop.

Our memory verse for today tells us that Abram obeyed God. He left home and journeyed on even though he did not know where he was going.

#### **GOD MADE ABRAM ANOTHER PROMISE: verse 7**

God led Abram one step at a time. After Abram reached Canaan, God made him another promise. The heart of God was pleased with Abram's obedience. Abram's heart was ready to listen when God spoke.

The Lord appeared to Abram. There was trust between them. So God made a new promise. God promised to give the land called Canaan to Abram and his descendants. At that time, Abram was more than 75 years old. He had no son. But Abram did not remind God of this. Abram went on believing God. He built an altar and worshipped Jehovah. He probably sacrificed an animal. This altar was built in a land where the Canaanites worshipped false gods. Abram was showing his absolute commitment to the true God. The altar was a reminder to Abram that Jehovah had appeared to him. Each time he passed the altar he remembered God's promise.

## **ABRAM'S FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD: verses 8,9**

Abram moved on a little further. Then he pitched his tents. The people could rest from their journey. The animals could rest. Abram stopped in the mountains. There was probably water nearby.

Abram built an altar and called on the name of Jehovah. The altar represents Abram's devotion to and fellowship with God. He walked and talked with God.

In verse 9 we read that Abram journeyed on again. He had no permanent home but lived in tents. His tent represents his separation from the world. He had been promised the land of Canaan. But the time had not yet come for it to be his. He continued to live as a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. He was devoted only to God and was free from the claim of any land or place. He allowed God to lead him one step at a time. He trusted God and followed where God led.

## **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT**

Abram was the father of those who live by faith. He was the first who was separated unto God to go wherever God would lead. Salvation demands a major separation. In leaving his home, Abram cut the ties with all the heathen gods who were worshipped there. By faith he made new ties with Jehovah.

Have you cut all ties with your old life? Have you left all ancestor worship, all charms, all witchcraft, all idolatry? Have you left all lying, stealing, adultery, all sinful behaviour? Have you heard God's call to leave your old life of sin and follow Jesus and his new way? Have you been separated unto God alone? Are you daily following him in faith and obedience?

adultery, all sinful behaviour? Have you heard God's call to leave your old life of sin and follow Jesus and his new way? Have you been separated unto God alone? Are you daily following him in faith and obedience?

God wants you to be a part of his great plan of salvation for all the world. Are you listening for this call each day to go and help others to know him? Are you learning to listen to his voice through his Word, the Bible? Are you following him each day?

### WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. God can bless us when we obey him.
2. We must worship God and pray to him often.
3. God will take care of us and our needs, when we trust him to do so.
4. God has a plan for each life. We must listen to him as he speaks to us through the Word of God.

## Lesson 6

# STRUGGLING WITH DOUBT

**SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME:** Genesis 15:1 to  
Genesis 18:15

**SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON:** Genesis  
17:1-8, 15-19

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:37).*

Abram was a man of faith who obeyed God by leaving his home and setting out on a long journey. Abram trusted God to lead him. Abram made a very important decision. He made the right choice when he followed Jehovah. But Abram had many more choices to make. Sometimes Abram did not wait for God to lead him. Sometimes Abram made his own plans. Sometimes Abram had doubts about God's plans for him. Abram had to learn to live by faith just as he had begun by faith.

In Genesis 16 we read of the tragic result of Abram's and Sarai's lack of faith. We see their unwillingness to wait patiently for God to fulfill his promise in his own time and way. Many years had passed since God had first given his promise to Abram. They still had no children. So Sarai asked Abram to have a child by her maid, Hagar. Since Hagar was Sarai's property, Hagar's child would be Sarai's. Sarai thought she had a good plan. Abram agreed to Sarai's plan. Hagar became pregnant.

Almost immediately Sarai was sorry for carrying out her own plan. Hagar had only

been a servant. But when she became pregnant, she became proud. She said words that made Sarai unhappy. Sarai and Abram both saw the wrong they had done in trying to carry out God's plan in their own fleshly ways.

Eventually Hagar had a son, Ishmael. But this son was not a part of God's plan for Abram. He was born because of the doubts and impatience of Sarai and Abram. Abram had to learn that his own way brought problems. But God's way brought blessings. God continued to teach Abram.

#### **GOD RENEWS HIS COVENANT: Read Genesis 17:1-8,15-19**

Thirteen years after God first made his covenant or agreement with Abram, God renewed his covenant. This time God changed Abram's and Sarai's names as a sign of what he promised to do. In this agreement, both God and Abram had to do certain things. God told Abram what he was required to do. Then God promised Abram what he himself would do.

God had a purpose in his covenant with Abram. God wanted to show mankind who he was. He wanted Abram to know that he was the Almighty God. He had ruled everything and had all power. He had a plan to restore man to a state of fellowship with him. He wanted to bless all people. And God told Abram that he would bless Abram if he obeyed. Abram was to help carry out God's plan for blessing all mankind.

#### **ABRAM'S PART OF THE COVENANT**

In verse 1 God told Abram what to do. He wanted Abram to "walk before" him. Abram was to live in continual consciousness of God's presence. His life was to be "blameless" before the all-seeing eye of

God. He could do this only by complete submission to God's will. God wanted Abram to grow in faith until all of his choices would be pleasing to God.

Abram, in humility and reverence, fell to the ground to worship God Almighty. In doing so, Abram was agreeing to keep his part of the covenant of agreement.

In verses 9-14 we read that Abram was to seal his part of the covenant by having all the males in his family circumcised.

### NEW NAMES

God promised to make Abram a father of many nations. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, meaning "Father of a Multitude." God promised that Sarai would have a son and she would be a mother of nations. Her name was changed to Sarah, meaning Princess. Each time Abraham thought of their new names, he would be reminded of God's promise to him.

### AN EVERLASTING COVENANT

God promised Abraham that kings would come from him. Then God brought in a new thought. (Read Genesis 17:7,8). This covenant would not end when Abraham died. It was to be a promise even to Abraham's children and grandchildren and so on forever. It was an everlasting covenant.

In verse 8 God repeated his promise to give Abraham the land of Canaan. However, at that time the land was full of the people called Canaanites. They were not children of Abraham. It was Abraham's land, but he did not yet have the children to fill it. When the descendants of Abram had multiplied, they went in to claim the land that was their inheritance.

Abraham heard God's promises. He agreed

in his heart to do his part. He agreed to teach his sons about the covenant and about being blameless before God. Abraham agreed again to follow God's plan, even though he had no son and the land was not yet his. He was willing to follow the Lord one step at a time. The Lord would be his God. His people would be the people of God.

#### **GOD'S PROMISE AND ABRAHAM'S DOUBT: verses 15-19**

God promised Abraham that he would have many descendants. At this time Abraham was nearly 100 years old and Sarai was 90 years old. God told Abraham that his wife Sarah would have a son. Abraham thought of his age. He thought of Sarah's age. Abraham knew that there was no human way that God's promise could really happen. Abraham forgot that God had created the world. He forgot that God himself had made all the plans for the world and the customary ways that things happened in it. God had made the time to plant and the time to harvest. God sent the rain and caused the sun to shine. And God could cause a 100-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman to have a child.

Abraham fell on his face and laughed because he forgot that he was talking to Almighty God. He remembered only his age. Then he asked God to accept the substitute son that he and Sarah had planned for. Abraham loved this son. Surely God's promise would be fulfilled in him.

#### **GOD'S ANSWER TO DOUBT:**

But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear a son, and you shall call his name Isaac."

God not only repeated his promise. He even gave Abraham a name for the son. God would not accept Abraham's plan. Abraham

would have to accept God's plan. God reminded Abraham that God was the one who was in control.

After Abraham's first doubt, God promise began to take root in his heart. This promise bore the fruit of faith and hope. Abraham came to see that God could set aside his laws of nature in order to give him this son of promise. Romans 4:19-21 tells us that Abraham "did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body... or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised."

#### THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S COVENANT

From Abraham's son, Isaac, came the Hebrew nation, through which the Saviour Jesus Christ came to bless the whole world. Each descendant of Abraham had to personally respond to God in faith and obedience in order to reap the blessings of the covenant. Their birth alone did not make them people of God's covenant, except in the flesh alone.

Today God has provided a way for us to become people of the covenant through the new birth. Galatians 3:7 tells us that it is "men of faith who are sons of Abraham." Those who share the faith of Abraham are his descendants. When God told Abraham he would be the father of many nations, he referred to the people of many nations who would believe in Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:14 says, "that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith".

God told Abraham that kings would come from him. Revelation 5:9,10 says that Jesus is worthy because by his blood he ransomed men from every tribe and nation. He made them "a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth."

Many people today try to work out their salvation in their own way. Like Abraham and Sarah when they planned for Ishmael, people think they will be saved by their own good works. But God's plan is for us to be born through God's promise, not like Ishmael, the son born according to the flesh. (See Galatians 4:22-28).

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Do you sometimes act like Abraham did? Do you see some need and make your own plans to take care of it? God expects us to plan our lives according to the teachings of Jesus in the Bible. There are times when God expects us to trust him to do those things we cannot do for ourselves.

We cannot plan for our own salvation and right standing before God. This is a gift that Jesus Christ made possible for us. Have you received this gift? Have you yielded your will to God's will?

We cannot always know the future and how we should plan. But God will lead us one step at a time. We must pray often and read the Bible. Then we will be ready to listen when God speaks.

We will grow stronger in our faith when we think about our doubts and then believe. Verses in the Bible will help us believe. The memory verse today should be memorized and quoted when you are tempted to doubt God's promises.

## WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. We must learn to obey God and trust him to lead us day by day.
2. God is patient with us even when we do not do what he wants us to do.
3. God does not change his plans to fit our plans. God's plans will be carried out according to his plan.
4. God's promises in his Word help us to learn to trust God more and more. Our faith will grow stronger and we shall overcome our doubts.
5. God has made a covenant with us in Jesus Christ. Our part is to repent and believe on Jesus. God's part is to give us everlasting life which includes blessings now and for eternity.

## Lesson 7

# GIVING WHAT GOD ASKS

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME: Genesis 22:1-19

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Genesis 22:1-13

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son" (Hebrews 11:17).*

God chose Abraham to be separated unto God himself. Then God began to teach Abraham to trust and obey him. Abraham had to learn that God could do what he promised even when it seemed impossible to men. Abraham had laughed when God said that he and Sarah would have a baby. But Abraham came to believe God's promise. When Sarah became pregnant, they were both filled with joy. And when their son was born, they named him Isaac. Isaac was the son of the covenant, the one promised by God.

God's purpose in revealing himself to Abraham was to teach Abraham who God was. God wanted a nation of people to follow him. Abraham was the father of those who believe and trust in God. God was leading Abraham a step at a time.

God sent the promised son. Abraham taught Isaac about the covenant. Isaac's birth meant that Abraham would have other descendants. Abraham thought of God's promise each time he looked at Isaac.

Abraham's life had been filled with tests. He had failed some of them by lack of faith and by disobedience. Those tests had instructed him and corrected him. Now God had one last test for Abraham. The test

was not so God would know what was in Abraham's heart. God already knew. The test was to refine Abraham's faith. It was to provide an opportunity for Abraham to know how much he really trusted God. It would be an example from which others could learn.

#### **GOD TESTED ABRAHAM: Read Genesis 22:1-13**

God told Abraham to take his only son and offer him as a burnt offering. This was a hard thing that God asked Abraham to do. God tested Abraham. Yet God did not tempt him to sin. Since Abraham had begun his first journey at God's command, Abraham had tried to fulfil his part of the covenant. When God sent Isaac, Abraham could see that God was keeping his part of the covenant.

Now God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham's pagan neighbours sacrificed their children to their pagan gods. So it was not a strange custom in those days. Yet Jehovah had called Abraham to leave the heathen ways. In the worship of Jehovah, usually a lamb was sacrificed, not a human being.

Abraham loved Isaac. Isaac was the son promised by God and born by a miracle. God had said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named" (Genesis 21:12). How could God command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac when he had made such a promise? Abraham must have been confused. What would happened to the covenant? He had cut his ties with the past. Now his human hope for the future was to be slain. Was God asking him to trust God once again for a miracle? Would he cling to his son, or would he trust God who had given him the son as a gift?

## A TIME OF CHOICE:

This story does not tell us what Abraham's thoughts were during this time. But we know that Abraham had the freedom of choice. What should he do? Should he make his own plans and try to keep Isaac for himself? Or should he obey God? Should he sacrifice the one in whom lay all his hopes? Should he make such a complete surrender and trust God alone? Should he continue to believe God's promise even as he sacrificed his son?

Abraham chose to trust God and to obey him. When God called, Abraham had answered. Now when God commanded, Abraham obeyed. Perhaps with sorrow, he prepared to go to the mountain God would show him. With a heavy heart he called Isaac to him and explained that they were going to the mountain to sacrifice to God. We know that Abraham worshipped God often, and this was not a strange journey to Isaac.

Abraham and Isaac and the servants walked for two days. On the morning of the third day, Abraham saw the mountain. He told the servants to stay while he and the boy went to worship. Abraham showed his faith by saying that both of them would return (verse 5). Abraham took the wood and the hot coals they would need to make their fire. Abraham carried the knife, He and Isaac travelled on up the mountain.

## ON THE MOUNTAIN

Abraham and Isaac climbed the mountain. After a time Isaac began to see a strange thing. He was accustomed to journeys like this. He himself had begun to learn about God. He knew about worship and sacrifice.

"My father!" he said.

"Here am I, my son," answered Abraham.

Isaac said, "I see the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"

What could Abraham say?

"God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." Abraham's words were true.

Isaac accepted this answer. He had been taught that God ruled the whole world. If God could cause his own birth, surely God could provide a lamb!

Abraham came to the place of sacrifice. Together he and Isaac arranged the wood. The fire was nearby. And then the time came for Abraham to explain to Isaac that he was the lamb. We do not know how Abraham felt. We do not know how Isaac felt. But Isaac obeyed his father Abraham even as Abraham obeyed God. Isaac was tied and laid on the wood. Then Abraham picked up the knife and raised it in the air. Abraham was ready to sacrifice his only son.

At this time Abraham passed his test. Abraham had demonstrated what God already knew. Abraham had shown his son the necessity of being willing to obey and trust all of his life, past and future, into God's hands. So God saved Isaac and gave him back to Abraham. God showed Abraham that he desires obedience, not sacrifice. Romans 12:1 says that God wants us to present our bodies to him as LIVING sacrifices. Abraham's trust was complete. He was ready to go to the next step in God's plan for his life.

### **GOD'S LAMB**

Abraham turned and looked. There was a ram caught in some bushes. God had indeed provided the animal. With great joy Abraham untied Isaac. He put the ram in Isaac's

place and sacrificed it. Then the angel of the Lord repeated the agreement that God had made with Abraham. Abraham would be blessed. Abraham and Isaac worshipped God. Then they went back down the mountain and travelled home together.

Because Abraham believed God, he trusted God to plan well for his life. So he obeyed God's commands. This made the way for God to bless Abraham. Abraham became very rich. He became very famous. Abraham not only fathered a great nation of people physically, he also has many descendants who have faith in God through Jesus Christ.

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Do you obey God? He can only bless you if you trust and obey him. Are you willing to surrender your life to him absolutely? Will you take his purpose and plan as your own?

How do you react when testing times come to you? Remember that these tests prove the genuineness of your faith. Compare your own faith in God with that shown by Abraham. Remember that God's promises are in the Bible to assure you that he is able to provide for you in your need.

Have you accepted God's substitute Lamb, Jesus? Remember that he took your death upon himself. He died in your place. God gave up his only Son for you. What will you give him? He wants your life, your time, your money, your all.

### WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. God will not tempt a person to sin. Never.
2. God will test our loyalty to him and our faith in him.

3. As we live our faith day by day, we are teaching our children to trust God also.
4. We should seek God's plan for our lives and then trust God completely with our lives.
5. God calls us to surrender to him what we hold most dear. Yet whatever God asks from us will in some way be restored him.

## Lesson 8

# "MYSELF" IS NOT ENOUGH

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME: Genesis 25:19-34; 27; 29

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON Genesis 25:29-34; 29:21-26

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight" (Proverbs 3:5).*

### ISAAC GETS A WIFE

Abraham and Sarah lived several years after Isaac was born. Their last years were full of joy because the promised son had been given by God. Isaac was supposed to carry on the covenant relationship with God. When Isaac was old enough to marry, Abraham knew that Isaac would need a wife who knew about Jehovah and believed in him. Together Isaac and his wife would make a home where God's plan could be fulfilled.

Abraham sent his most trusted servant back to his homeland to find a wife for Isaac. The servant had learned about Jehovah from Abraham. He prayed to Abraham's God for guidance and God led him to find Rebecca as Isaac's wife.

Isaac and Rebecca were married. They made a home together. Isaac inherited all of Abraham's wealth, all the animals and servants and gold. Isaac was a rich man. But there was one thing they lacked. Isaac and Rebecca waited 20 years for God to send them a son. Finally, Isaac prayed for his wife. And Rebecca became pregnant.

## ISAAC AND REBECCA HAVE TWINS

One day Jehovah spoke to Rebecca. God told her that she would have twin sons. Her sons would be the founders of rival nations. God also told her that the younger son would rule the older son.

In those days, the firstborn son had a special position. The eldest son received twice as much of his father's wealth as his brothers. He also became the family priest. That was his birthright. The firstborn son also received a blessing from his father. The blessing and the birthright showed that the eldest son replaced the aging father as head of the family. In Isaac's family there was the covenant with God. So the eldest should have been the one through whom the people of God descended. He should have been the one responsible to God for fulfilling the promises made to Abraham.

Rebecca's twins were different. Esau was the oldest. He was very hairy. He loved to hunt and to be outdoors. Jacob was the youngest twin. He liked to be at home. Isaac and Rebecca did not work together to teach their children. Isaac loved the wild meat which Esau brought for him to eat. Rebecca loved Jacob best because he liked to be with her at their tents. So their boys were learning different lessons from their parents.

Esau and Jacob grew to be men. Even though they learnt about God from their parents, they did not consider God's plans very important.

## JACOB PLANS FOR HIMSELF: Read Genesis 25:29-34

Before the twins were born, God had told Rebecca that the first born would serve the other twin. Rebecca told Jacob what God had said. She knew that to be the head of the

house, the birthright would have to belong to Jacob. Perhaps Rebecca and Jacob talked about how to get the birthright. They did not trust God to carry out God's own plan. Jacob did not wait for God to do things God's way. Jacob decided to "help God" by making his own selfish plans.

One day Jacob was cooking at home. He was cooking lentils. Esau came in from hunting. Perhaps he had been gone several days with little food and water. He may have been carrying some meat for a long distance. He was very tired. As he approached home, Esau smelled Jacob's food. Esau asked Jacob to give him some food. Jacob saw that Esau was very hungry. So Jacob quickly planned a way to get the birthright for himself.

Jacob said, "I'll give you some food if you will give me your birthright."

#### ESAU'S FOOLISH CHOICE

Perhaps Jacob was surprised that Esau quickly agreed to sell his birthright. Jacob insisted that Esau swear to give it to him. Without this oath, Esau could have taken the birthright back later. Esau forgot the future. He threw away his spiritual privileges for a moment of fleshly pleasure. He sold his birthright for a pot of beans!

Read what Hebrews 12:16, 17 says about Esau's foolish decision. People today do things just as foolish as Esau did. Men and women sell their purity for a moment of excitement in the flesh. Men sacrifice good jobs for a few dollars which they steal from their employers. People live for the enjoyment and pleasures of this world of while rejecting God's eternal plan for them in Christ.

## **JACOB AND REBECCA TRICK ISAAC: Genesis 27**

Jacob had the birthright. Now he needed the blessing. Many years passed. Rebecca wanted to help Jacob. So she made all plan for him to receive the blessing through deceit. She would help make Jakob feel and smell like Esau. Isaac, old and blind, thought Jacob was Esau. Therefore he gave Jacob the blessing.

Jacob and his mother sought the right thing in the wrong way. If they had waited, undoubtedly God would have worked out God's plan in his own way. His way would not have been the way of deceit. The end never justifies the means.

Jacob had the blessing. But both he and Rebecca had to pay a price for their deceit. When Esau heard that he had been tricked again, he made a plan of his own. He would wait until Isaac died, then he would kill Jacob. Rebecca heard about Esau's plan. She worked out a scheme to get Jacob away from home. Because of her scheme, Isaac sent Jacob back to Rebecca's relatives to find a wife.

Now Jacob had to leave the comforts of his home. He never saw his mother again. He had to face loneliness and regret. Deceit and selfishness were not good ways to get what he wanted.

What about God's plan for a people who would trust and obey him? How could he use such a man to carry out his covenant? God was not finished with Jacob yet. He would teach him and work in his life to help him become obedient.

## **THE TRICKSTER IS TRICKED: Read Genesis 29:21-26**

Jacob had tricked others. Now he wanted something. He wanted his Uncle Laban's daughter, Rachel, for his wife. But Laban

wanted to follow the custom of his people. It was necessary for the oldest daughter to marry first. So Laban tricked Jacob.

On the evening of the wedding Laban gave a feast. Everyone ate a lot of food. They were happy together. Then the bride was brought to Jacob. She had on lovely clothes. Probably her face was covered by a veil. It was night time and Jacob could not see. He went in to his new wife.

Morning came. And Jacob discovered Laban's trick. He had married the oldest daughter, Leah! Jacob learnt what it was to have someone else trick him. Jacob was angry. But Laban promised to give him Rachel also. Jacob worked 14 long years to get his beloved Rachel.

God was preparing Jacob for the fulfilment of the covenant promises. Jacob's life was still full of tricks and deceit. He had not yet learnt to let God make the plans and bring them to pass. He had not yet learnt to obey God.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

What kind of person are you? Do you use bribery and deceit to bring progress in your own life? Have you ever asked God what his plan is for you? When you find it, you must trust God to carry out his own plan for you in his way. If he tells you to do something, you must be ready to do it. God will enable you to follow his plan for your life. You must trust him. You must read the Bible to know what kind of person God wants you to be. You must talk to God in prayer. You must listen to God in prayer.

## WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. Trickery and deceit are never in God's plans for anyone.
2. Self-sufficiency is never right, but trusting God is always right.
3. We must never try to do God's work for him. God is able to do his own work. God wants us to do the work he has for us to do. He wants us to be honest and trustworthy.

## MEETING GOD BRINGS CHANGE

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME: Genesis 28:10-22; 32:1-32; 33:1-4

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Genesis 28:10-22; 32:24-30

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you" (1 Peter 5:6).*

God chose Abraham and his family to be part of his plan of salvation for the world. God gave Isaac to Abraham so that his plan could continue. Then he chose Jacob, one of Isaac's sons, as the next one in line to receive his covenant promise. But Jacob had to be changed before God could use him. He was a trickster, a liar, a deceiver. He had not yet met God. God loved Jacob and called him to serve him.

THE FIRST NIGHT AWAY FROM HOME: Read Genesis 28:10-22

Jacob had aroused his brother Esau's anger by cheating him out of their father's blessing. Jacob had to flee from home. Isaac sent him to seek a wife at his Uncle Laban's home. Though Jacob was wealthy, he left home all alone, with only a few clothes. On the first night of his journey, he lay down on the ground to sleep under the stars. He used a stone for a pillow. Perhaps he felt lonely and sad as he lay there all alone.

## JACOB'S DREAM

As he slept, Jacob had a dream of a ladder set up on earth and reaching to heaven. On the ladder angels were ascending and descending. God was standing there. This was Jacob's first meeting with Jehovah God. Before this experience, Jacob had only been acquainted with God through his father Isaac. But faith in God is not something we inherit from our family. Each of us must become personally acquainted with and personally committed to God.

Therefore God took the initiative in helping sinful Jacob to know him. The ladder and the angels in his dream made him aware that there is communication between earth and heaven. God actually spoke to Jacob and gave him the same covenant promise Abraham and Isaac had been given. Jacob had wondered about his future. Now God assured him of his care and protection by promising, "I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land" (verse 15).

## JACOB'S RESPONSE

Jacob awoke, aware of God's presence. He exclaimed, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I did not know it" (verse 16). This was the turning point in Jacob's life. He was filled with awe and reverent fear. He took his stone "pillow" and poured oil on it as an act of consecration. He worshipped God and set this place aside as the "house of God", giving it the name Bethel. This stone was a memorial to the fact that Jehovah had manifested himself to Jacob at this spot.

Jacob made a personal commitment to God. He took Jehovah as his God. Jacob promised to worship him and to give him a tenth of

all God gave him.

Some people feel that Jacob was "bargaining" with God when he made this vow in verse 20-22. We must understand that man is in no position to lay down the conditions God must meet before man will follow him. Rather than laying down conditions, it seems that Jacob was only repeating the four promises God had made to him. Jacob was saying, "God, SINCE you have promised me your presence, your protection, your provision, and future restoration to my father's house, you shall be my God."

Spiritually, Jacob still had a long way to go. Yet he had made the beginning by meeting God and responding to him. God had accepted his commitment and would continue to work in his life to teach him to trust and obey.

#### THE NEXT 20 YEARS

Jacob went to Haran where he worked 14 years to pay Laban for his daughters, Rachel and Leah. Then he worked another six years for his uncle. Though he grew wealthy during these years, he was not always faithful to God. He still used trickery and deception to get what he wanted.

#### JACOB RETURNS HOME

Finally God told Jacob it was time to go home. He took his wives, children, servant, cattle, sheep and other animals and started home. On his way, he sent messengers to tell his brother Esau that he was coming home. They returned with the news that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. Jacob was filled with fear as he remembered Esau's vow to kill him. Jacob sent gifts to Esau. He divided his large family so that they could not all be killed at once.

When Jacob had done all he could do to protect his family, he took his fears to the Lord in prayer. Jacob reminded God of the promises God had made to Jacob many years before. He asked for the Lord's protection and deliverance. Jacob's prayer shows that he had changed. But he still was not humble before God. He was still self-sufficient and was not yet ready to fulfil God's plan for him as an heir of the covenant.

#### **JACOB STRUGGLES WITH GOD: Read Genesis 32:24-30**

Jacob reached the Jabbok brook. He took his family across and then returned to spend time alone with God. There in the darkness he was seized by a Man who wrestled with him all night. This Man was really God in human form. Jacob used all his strength and all his plans, but he could not win over this One. At last Jacob had met One whose power and skill were greater than his own. He struggled until morning was beginning to break. His conqueror reached out and knocked Jacob's hip out of joint. Still Jacob clung to the Man and said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

The Man asked, "What is your name?"

Jacob had to confess that his name was Jacob, a trickster, a supplanter, a self-confident schemer, a cheater.

Then God said, "Your name shall no more be called Jacob but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed" (verse 28). Then God blessed Jacob.

Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, meaning "The Face of God." He had seen God face to face.

This experience began a new chapter in

Jacob's life. He had learnt that blessing does not come by deceit or by self-confidence. It comes by submission to God. When Jacob finally yielded completely to God, he became a new man with a new name, "Israel", meaning "Prince". He could now receive God's blessing and take his place in God's plan of founding a new nation that would be called by his name. He could now prevail in spiritual things if he continued to submit to God's will and plan. Through Israel God could continue to work out his plan to redeem mankind. All the rest of his life Israel (Jacob) would be crippled. Yet his limp would remind him of his new royalty. It would remind him of the power of his great God.

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Have you ever met God and asked him to be your God through the salvation offered by his Son Jesus? When Jacob met and wrestled with God, he was a changed person. When we meet Jesus Christ and accept him as our Lord, we receive a new kind of life. Is your life different now from what it was before you became a Christian? Do your neighbours see by your actions and words that you are God's child?

All of us want our families to have plenty of food and clothes. Lying and trickery is not the way to care for them. We must meet God and put ourselves under his orders. God is already looking for us before we begin to trust in him.

### WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. When we meet God, we will change for the better. If we reject Jesus Christ, our lives will become even more wicked and sinful.

2. God wants to carry out his will in our lives. We must be willing to do his will if we want his guidance.
3. God has put each of us on earth for a purpose.

## THE RESULTS OF PRIDE AND JEALOUSY

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME: Genesis 37

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Genesis 37:5-11, 17-20, 23, 24

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful" (1 Corinthians 13:4,5).*

In every kind of organization where people must work together, pride and jealousy cause problems. An elected leader may criticize his people because they do not show him honour. Someone who hoped to be elected criticizes the one who was chosen. He tries to point out the elected one's faults to all the people. A son or daughter may be jealous of the attention his or her father gives to another child in the family.

In every situation jealousy and pride bring fighting and division. In every case, the organization or family would be stronger and benefit each individual more, if every one worked together.

Jealousy and pride can be defeated through love. God sent Jesus to show us the way of love.

The story of Joseph shows how bad jealousy and pride can be.

ISRAEL'S UNHAPPY HOME: Read Genesis 37:1-4

Jacob, now named Israel, grew up in a home where his parents had favourites. The

problems that came from this should have warned him not to make the same mistake. Yet when Israel became a father, he showed plainly that he loved one son more than all the others.

Rachel was his favourite wife. Because of his uncle's trickery, Jacob had to work 14 years for this woman he loved so much. When she bore him Joseph, Israel heaped all his love on this son. He gave him a long, expensive coat that showed Israel's preference for Joseph. The wearer of such a coat was not expected to do the hard labour that those who wore shorter garments had to do. Israel's other sons became very jealous of Joseph and began to hate him. Israel brought strife and hatred and jealousy into his home by giving one child special attention and love.

Joseph also did many things that caused his brothers to hate him. His honesty and obedience aroused their jealousy. When they did something wrong, Joseph told his father about it. Perhaps he allowed the wrong attitude toward his brothers. Perhaps he allowed pride to cause him to act superior to them.

#### **JOSEPH, THE DREAMER: Read Genesis 37:5-11**

Joseph spent a lot of time with his father. Israel probably taught him much about Jehovah. Joseph developed a deep faith in God while still quite young. God chose him to carry out his future plans for Israel's family. God began to speak to him through dreams. These dreams pointed out that Joseph, the second youngest son, would rule over the other sons. His second dream prophesied that his brothers, as well as his father and mother, would bow down to him.

Perhaps things would have been different if Joseph had not told his dreams to his jealous brothers. Joseph lacked discretion in telling of dreams in which he was so important. Was it childish pride that made him want them to hear his dreams? His brothers resented his superiority. Their proud hearts did not want to hear that they would have to bow down to a younger brother. Most likely they feared his dreams. Or they may have thought that the dreams only came from Joseph's ambitions.

When Joseph told his second dream, Israel rebuked him. Yet Israel had had dreams of his own. So he began to think about these dreams and wonder if God was speaking through them.

#### **THE PLOT TO KILL JOSEPH: Read Genesis 37:17-20**

Israel had large flocks of animals. His older sons cared for these flocks and constantly moved from one place to another to find grass and water. They had been gone from home for a long time. Israel wanted to know if they were safe. So he sent Joseph to find them and bring him word.

Obediently, Joseph went to look for his brothers. After much effort, he finally found them. They recognized him while he was still a long way off. And they began to plan Joseph's death. They wanted to put an end to him and to his dreams. Like Cain, their jealousy and hate cause them to consider murder. They would add to their sins by deceiving and lying to their father about what had happened to Joseph. With dead consciences, they schemed evil plans.

#### **RUEBEN SAVES JOSEPH'S LIFE: Read Genesis 37:21-24**

Reuben was the oldest brother. His conscience told him that murder would bring

guilt on all who had a part in it. He knew he would be held responsible by Israel for the actions of his brothers. So he requested his brothers not to kill Joseph. He suggested that they throw him in a pit. He planned to come back later and rescue Joseph and return him to Israel.

Even though he saved Joseph's life, Rueben did not show real love of Joseph. As the oldest, Reuben should have rebuked the others and sent Joseph back to his father right then.

Nevertheless, God was using Rueben to save the life of Joseph. God's plan would be fulfilled, even though Joseph would have to suffer first.

#### **JOSEPH IS SOLD: Read Genesis 37:28**

Joseph was happy that at last he had found his brothers. How surprised he must have been when, instead of welcoming him, they grabbed him, jerked his coat off him, and threw him in a deep hole. Then while young Joseph was frightened, hungry and alone in the pit, his brothers sat down to eat. Rueben, however, was not with the others.

As they began to eat, a caravan of traders came by. Judah suggested that they make a profit from their brother by selling him to the traders. And so they yielded to the sin of greed and sold their brother into slavery. Joseph would be taken far away to Egypt.

God was working out his plan in spite of the sin of Joseph's wicked brothers. As we look back at the story now, we can see the truth of these words: "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). But at the

time it must have been very hard for Joseph to understand. We know that his strong faith in God sustained this young man during this hard time. He grew stronger in faith and in humility.

#### REUBEN'S DISTRESS AND JACOB'S GRIEF

When Rueben returned to the group, he looked in the pit. Joseph was gone! Then he revealed to his brothers what he had planned to do. And they told him what they had done.

The brothers killed a goat and put its blood on Joseph's coat. Then they took it to their father. They were caught in the circle of sin. One sin led to another. Then they had to commit another to conceal that one. And on it went. Thus they deceived their father by letting him believe that wild beasts had killed his son Joseph.

Israel grieved greatly over his favourite son. He tore his garments and wore sack cloth. His other sons tried to comfort him. But he refused to be comforted and continued to mourn for Joseph.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

In this story, who was hurt by pride and jealousy? Joseph was hurt. By his lack of discretion, he caused hate and jealousy to grow in his brother's hearts. Then their jealousy and hatred caused them to sell him as a slave.

Israel was hurt. By showing favouritism, Israel helped cause the hatred among his sons. When he lost Joseph, his heart was broken with grief.

Joseph's brothers were hurt. They chose to allow hatred, pride, and jealousy to rule their lives. Every time they looked on the sorrow of their old father they had to

feel again their guilt. They could not find peace in their hearts, because they were unwilling to confess to Israel what they had done.

Have you ever felt jealous of someone who was a leader in your home, town or church? Are you jealous when God uses another person for doing a special work? Are you jealous when another person is singled out for a special honour and you are neglected? Are you jealous if someone receives a gift and you do not?

Do you boast about being a leader? Do you act superior to others who do not have as high a position as you have? Do you demand special recognition and respect from others? Do you resent those who point out your faults?

All pride and jealousy hurts you. They are sin. Only God can take sinful thoughts away and put loving thoughts in their place. Let us confess our sin to God. Let us allow him to fill us with love in place of pride and jealousy.

#### WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. When God created mankind, he created each one different. God gave each of us different abilities.
2. We must not be jealous of others who are chosen by God for a special work.
3. Jealousy and hatred cause much hurt and division. They lead to other sins. We must trust God and turn away from these sins.

4. Love is God's answer to our problem today.
5. Parents must not show favouritism among their children. This always leads to many problems.
6. God can take the bad things that happen to us and use them for our good if we will trust him to do so.

## Lesson 11

# VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME: Genesis 39

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Genesis 39:1-12, 19-21

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it"*  
(1 Corinthians 10:13).

There was once a monkey who thought he was strong enough to have a tug-of-war with a crocodile, a vulture and a hyena. But monkey's friend, elephant knew how weak monkey was. Elephant determined to help him.

The day of the tug-of-war arrived. Elephant went early to the place where it would be held. He squatted down to make himself look like a big rock. All the participants arrived and took their places. When the word came, "Pull!", monkey began to pull against his three enemies with all his might.

The enemies began gaining on monkey even though elephant was sitting on monkey's end of the rope. Then elephant caught hold of the rope with his trunk. He gently tugged on it to let monkey know he was there.

Monkey turned around, saw his friend, and cried, "Help me, Friend!"

And so elephant put all his weight into a tremendous tug. He sent the enemies to the ground in defeat.

This story describes the tug-of-war that

goes on between us and our enemies, the flesh, the world and the devil. We are weak and cannot win over our enemies. But Jesus, our Helper, is strong. He waits for us to call on him, asking him to do the pulling for us. Then the victory is ours through him.

Our lesson today is about the temptations Joseph faced in Egypt and the victory that was his through Jehovah God.

#### **JOSEPH WAS FAITHFUL TO GOD: Read Genesis 39:1-5**

The young man Joseph was taken far from his home into the land of Egypt. He was shamed and humiliated as he was put on the slave market. An officer of Pharaoh, Potiphar, bought him and took him to his home to be his slave. Things began to be very difficult for Joseph. In his home, he had been permitted to do what he liked. Now he was a slave with no rights. He could only do what his master wanted. He lived among people who worshipped false gods, had strange customs, and spoke a language he did not understand.

In spite of all this, Joseph did not become discouraged. He did not understand why God was allowing this to happen to him. Yet he continued to trust and worship Jehovah God. He worked hard at any job he was given to do. He did his work heartily, "as serving the Lord and not men" (Colossians 3:23). He was dependable and did not steal or cheat.

#### **GOD WAS WITH JOSEPH**

In Deuteronomy 28:2 we are told that those who obey the Lord will be blessed. Thus we read in Genesis 39 that Jehovah was with Joseph and caused him to prosper and find success in all he did.

Potiphar took notice of Joseph and the way he worked and lived each day. Perhaps he asked Joseph why he was so different. Joseph must have told Potiphar about the God he loved and served. Potiphar did not believe in or worship Joseph's God. Yet Potiphar knew that Joseph's success came from his God. Joseph was a good witness of Jehovah's power and faithfulness. Perhaps he put a hunger in Potiphar's heart to know Jehovah.

Potiphar trusted Joseph and promoted him until Joseph became the chief servant in Potiphar's household. He cared for all Potiphar owned. God blessed Potiphar because of Joseph. They had a good harvest from the crops. The flocks of animals increased. Potiphar realised that his prosperity was because of Joseph's blessings from God.

#### **POTIPHAR'S WIFE TEMPTED JOSEPH: Read Genesis 39:6-12**

Joseph was a handsome man. He was young and strong. He was the son of a rich man even though he was a slave. He was pleasing to the eye.

Potiphar was a captain of the guard, an officer of Pharaoh. He was often gone from home on business in Pharaoh's army. His wife was left at home alone. She began to "cast her eyes upon Joseph" as he went about his work. Then, finally, she invited him to lie with her. Joseph had no wife. It must have been a temptation for him to satisfy the fleshly appetites of his body.

But Joseph was a believer and follower of Jehovah God. He had been taught from his childhood to follow God's laws for living. This meant that he should lie only with the wife he would have someday.

Joseph told Potiphar's wife, "No". He gave her his reasons. First, he did not want to betray the trust his master placed in him. Second, she was the wife of another man. And finally, Joseph told her that he would be sinning against his God if he accepted the invitation. To Joseph, his obedience to God was more important than anything.

Potiphar's wife would not accept Joseph's answer. She tempted him again and again. Finally, one day Joseph went into Potiphar's house to do his work. Potiphar's wife saw that the other servants were not there. Perhaps with no one around to see, Joseph would agree to her request. So she caught hold of Joseph as he passed by. Joseph was afraid. He jerked loose from the woman and ran out of the house. He left his coat in her hand. His only thought was to get away from Potiphar's wife.

#### POTIPHAR'S WIFE LIES ABOUT JOSEPH

Potiphar's lonely wife did not believe in Jehovah. She did not have rules to live by. Joseph's looks pleased her very much, and she wanted Joseph to satisfy the desire she felt in her body. She was the wife of a rich man. She could have whatever she wanted. But she could not have Joseph. Her desire turned to anger and hate. So she planned to hurt Joseph because he had refused her.

The woman kept Joseph's garment. She called in the other servants and told them Joseph tried to lie with her. She told them that Joseph had run away when she began to cry out. Then she put Joseph's coat away until Potiphar himself came home. She told her husband the same lie about Joseph.

Potiphar became angry. He did not ask

any questions about Joseph. He just believed his wife. He forgot how faithful Joseph had been. He forgot how God had blessed his household because of Joseph. In his anger he had Joseph sent to Pharaoh's prison. Perhaps later Potiphar and his wife were both sorry for their actions as they realized that Joseph took with him the Lord's favour. It departed from Potiphar's house because of a lie. Her false gods could give Potiphar's wife no strength to resist temptation.

#### JOSEPH IN PRISON: Read Genesis 39:19-23

God did not forget Joseph. We do not know what Joseph thought about during his first days in prison. He may have thought about the injustice he suffered. He was punished for doing right! But soon he realised that God was still caring for him. He remained faithful to God. Even in prison God showed him his steadfast love.

The keeper of the prison liked Joseph. God gave Joseph favour with those around him. Soon he became a trusted man.

Pharaoh in the palace. So the people who had Egypt.

that all of served and was still purpose for

jobs they did in Pharaoh's palace. Joseph came to be known to people who helped Pharaoh govern his land of Egypt.

Joseph did not ever forget that his success came from God. He trusted God while in prison. He trusted God to fulfil God's promise for his life.

#### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

temptations. He had to become could trust

Let us think about Joseph's temptations and the way he overcame them in victory over the temptation to become discouraged. He knew that he could

God. Therefore he kept a happy attitude in the midst of a hard life that was filled with troubles.

Joseph had victory over the temptation to be lazy. He had victory over self-pity. He considered that his work was from God. Though it was hard, he did it well. He was a faithful steward of the work God gave him to do.

Joseph had victory over the temptation to commit adultery. He had virtuous standards to live by. These standards were strengthened through a close walk with God. He did not forget that he was responsible to God first, and to man second.

Joseph's victory over this last temptation also came because he REFUSED to LISTEN to the woman's suggestions. He REFUSED even to be WITH her. He stayed away from her as much as possible. He also REFUSED to GRATIFY his physical desire in a way that would not please God. And last, FLED from the temptation.

Some of us face the same temptations Joseph faced. Perhaps our temptation is to steal and lie and cheat. Or we may be tempted to steal the tithe that belongs to the Lord. Whatever our temptation, let us learn to find victory in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us follow the steps Joseph took in order to be victorious Christians. Let us refuse to even listen to Satan's suggestions to us. Let us flee by resisting the devil. Let us draw near to God and know that he will draw near to us and give us victory. (James 4:7,8).

## WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. Every person is tempted. But believers have the Holy Spirit to give them strength to overcome temptation.
2. When difficult times come to us, we can be sure that God is with us and loves us. He is working out his plan in our lives.
3. When we overcome temptations, and when we come through troubles and trials, we become stronger in our faith. We become more faithful servants of God.
4. We are witnesses to the world by the way we live and do our work.

## TRUE REPENTANCE

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME: Genesis 42-44

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Genesis 42:18-24; 44:18-23, 30-34

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love; according to thy abundant mercy blot out my transgressions" (Psalm 51:1).*

God gave his promise to Abraham to make him into a great nation. He promised to give him and his descendants the land of Canaan. However, during the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the land of Canaan was filled with many nations. It was God's plan to remove Israel (Jacob) and his family from Canaan to a place where they could become a mighty nation. Then they could later be restored to the Promised Land.

This is how Joseph fitted into God's great plan. Joseph was taken to Egypt as a slave. He was imprisoned for a crime he did not commit. While in prison, he was called forth to interpret a dream for Pharaoh. God gave Joseph the interpretation that there would be seven years of plenty, and then seven years of famine in Egypt. From being a prisoner, Joseph was elevated to a position second only to Pharaoh. His work was to store up grain for the time of famine. During the famine, people came from far way to buy grain from Joseph, who they called their "saviour". Joseph's own brothers came to buy grain from him.

God had sent Joseph ahead of his family to preserve their lives, and to prepare a place for them to live. Through Joseph's years of suffering, he had learnt humility and obedience. God was still working out his plan. But he had other servants who must be humbled. One of these was Judah, the son who would inherit the birthright of Israel, the one through whom God would send the promised Saviour. God needed also to work with the other heads of the 12 tribes of Israel.

In today's lesson, God uses Joseph to humble Judah and the others, and to bring them all to repentance.

#### JOSEPH MEETS HIS BROTHERS

Israel learnt about the grain in Egypt and sent his sons to buy some. Israel kept at home his youngest son, Benjamin, the second son of Rachel who had died at his birth. Benjamin was Israel's joy in his old age.

Joseph's 10 older brothers came to Egypt one day and bowed before Joseph. He could hardly believe his eyes as he recognized them! Perhaps he remembered his dreams as a boy. The brothers did not recognize Joseph, for he looked and spoke like an Egyptian. He decided not to tell them who he was. He wanted to find out if they were still as wicked as they had been when he last saw them 20 years before.

Joseph accused them of being spies. Fearfully they denied his charges and told about their father and youngest brother at home. Joseph said that one of them should remain in prison while the others returned home with the grain. Then they should return with the youngest brother to prove

they were telling the truth.

#### **THE BROTHERS CONFESS THEIR SINS: Read Genesis 42:18-23**

The brothers began to talk together and to say that God was sending this punishment on them because they had refused to listen Joseph's cries for mercy. They did not know that this mighty ruler could understand them as they talked together, for he had spoken to them through an interpreter.

Joseph turned aside and wept as he realized that they had lived with their guilt for 20 long years. But he was not yet sure they were truly repentant. So he carried out his plan and kept Simeon there while the others returned to their father. He arranged for their money to be put in their sacks along with the grain.

#### **THE BROTHERS ARE TESTED**

After some months, Israel's grain was gone again. The brothers told their father that they could not get any more unless they took Benjamin with them. Israel did not want to let Benjamin go. Finally, Judah promised his father that he would guarantee Benjamin's safety and would take the blame forever if Benjamin were not returned to his father.

So the brothers went down to Egypt again, taking double money this time. When Joseph saw them with his youngest brother Benjamin, he was filled with joy. He commanded his servant to invite them to his house for a feast and to bring Simeon out to them. Joseph made plans to test his brothers to see what their hearts were really like. He knew they were sorry they

had treated him so badly. He also knew they were no longer greedy for money since they had returned the money for the grain. But Joseph wanted to see how the other brothers felt toward Benjamin. He wanted to see if they had come to have real love for their father.

At the feast, Joseph gave Benjamin five times as much as he gave the others. Would the others show jealousy toward him? Next Joseph arranged for his cup to be put in Benjamin's sack before they started on their journey. Then he sent his servant after them to demand that the one who had the cup should be his master's slave. Joseph wanted too see if they would permit Benjamin to become a slave as they had let him be. Joseph wanted to see if they would help Benjamin out of this trouble or would they blame him?

#### **JUDAH SHOWS TRUE REPENTANCE: Read Genesis 44:16-23 and 30-34**

As the brothers all came before Joseph again, they were speechless with fear and despair. Judah spoke for them all. He offered no excuse for what had happened. He did not deny anything. To be sure they did not steal the money or the cup. But Judah knew they were guilty before God for their past sins against Joseph. He knew they had caused their father grief and anguish through the years. He knew they deserved punishment from God.

And so Judah confessed their sins and simply pled for mercy. What else could he ask for? Only mercy, something he did not deserve!

Joseph listen to Judah, the one who had suggested selling him as a slave many years before. Now he heard Judah's plea to take

Benjamin's place as the ruler's slave. Joseph could see that Judah had no jealousy in his heart. He was willing for Benjamin to be first in his father's love. Judah was willing to sacrifice himself as a slave in order to save his old father from more heart-ache and suffering. Verses 31 and 34 show how much Judah loved his father.

### THE CHANGE IN JUDAH

Judah had changed through the years. Jehovah had worked in his heart to bring him to humility and repentance. He had learnt to share his father's love with his brothers. He was more concerned for Israel's welfare than for his own. He kept his promise to his father even though he might have become a slave. His love caused him to offer his life to save Benjamin and Israel. Judah had learnt to think of himself as a servant of God and to obey him. Judah was now ready to be God's representative in working out his great plan.

### THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Joseph was not deliberately torturing his brothers through the tests he gave them. He wanted to show his love and forgiveness to them. But he knew they had to face up to what was in their hearts and truly repent first.

God deals with us in a similar way today. He wants to cleanse us and forgive us and bless us. But he cannot do it when we keep unconfessed sin in our hearts. He makes sure that the sin burns on our consciences in order to bring us to a point where we admit our sins and quit denying it. He sends discipline our way to get us to quit blaming others and making excuses

for our sin. He wants to get us to the point where we love him and others more than we love ourselves. He waits to hear us say, "Have mercy on me, O God. Against thee have I sinned. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

Then God will show mercy on us. He will forgive us. Our joy will be restored. We can find God's blessings as we begin to fulfil his plan for us.

#### WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. When we have unconfessed sin in our hearts, our conscience will cry out against us.
2. The only way to get forgiveness is to admit our sin and cry for mercy.
3. True repentance brings about a change in attitude towards others. We will then be ready to sacrifice our own desires and help others.
4. True repentance means love instead of jealousy and selfishness toward others.

## THE LOVE THAT FORGIVES

SCRIPTURES TO STUDY AT HOME: Genesis 45;  
Genesis 50:14-26

SCRIPTURES FOR TODAY'S LESSON: Genesis 45:4-  
15; 50:15-21

### MEMORY VERSE:

*"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).*

During World War 2 the Nazis hated all Jews and had a plan to try to kill them all. A Dutch woman named Corrie Ten Boom and her family were believers in Jesus Christ. They loved the Jews and helped save the lives of many of them by hiding them. For this "crime" Corrie and her family were imprisoned by the Nazis. The guards treated them very cruelly. Corrie's father and her sister both died while in prison.

Eventually Corrie was released from prison. After her release, she wrote a letter to the one who had betrayed her family and caused their arrest. She told him that she forgave him and was praying for his salvation. Corrie devoted the rest of her life to telling people all over the world about God's love. She taught that we must forgive those who have wronged us.

Then one day Corrie found herself face to face with the guard who used to beat them so mercilessly. This guard had come to ask her to forgive him. Memories of his cruelty flooded her mind. Satan told her she could'nt forgive this person. Yet Jesus reminded her of his forgiveness of her own

sins. Corrie reached out and shook the outstretched hand of this former guard. She said, "I forgive you, brother." Then a big burden rolled away from her heart.

Our lesson today teaches us about forgiveness. We shall see how Joseph freely forgave his brothers of all the wrong they did him. We shall see how we too must forgive.

#### **JOSEPH REVEALS HIS IDENTITY: Read Genesis 45:4-15**

Last week we saw how Joseph's brothers truly repented. They all came back with Benjamin to plead for his freedom. Judah spoke for them all and cried for mercy. When Joseph heard Judah's self-sacrificial love, his heart was touched. Seeing such humility, Joseph could not continue to act as the stern ruler. He had to reveal himself as their brother. So he sent all the Egyptians out of the room. What he had to say was not for their ears. Joseph began to weep. He cried so loudly that the people in Pharaoh's house heard the crying. Then he told his brothers, "I am Joseph."

The brothers were amazed! They were confused and afraid. They began to draw back from him. Could it be that this powerful ruler was really their brother whom they believed dead? What would happen to them now?

#### **JOSEPH FORGIVES HIS BROTHERS**

Joseph saw their fear and confusion. He reassured them. He lovingly asked them to come near to him. Then he said "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt." He spoke of their selling him, not to wound them, but to convince them of who he really was. Then he tried to put them at ease in his presence. He tried to show that, in

spite of their guilt, God had been in control all these years. God had been working out his plan to save their lives and the life of their father. Even though sinful man plots to destroy life, the purpose of a loving God is to save it.

#### **JOSEPH PROMISES TO PROVIDE FOR HIS FAMILY**

Joseph knew that there would be many more years of famine. He had access to an abundance of food and of rich land for their flocks and herds. He wanted them all near him so he could provide for them. He invited them all to come and live with him in Egypt.

Joseph was asking his brothers to trust him. His love would not only forgive them. It would also provide for them, preserve them and protect them, even though they had one denied him the same blessings.

Love that forgives always accepts the responsibility of meeting the needs of the one who once did the wrong.

#### **JOSEPH DEMONSTRATES HIS LOVE**

Words were not enough to show the great love Joseph had in his heart for his brothers. He began to embrace them one by one. As they embraced, they wept. First there was Benjamin, the youngest, who was probably frightened by this older brother whom he had never really known. Then came Rueben who saved his life many years before. Then came Simeon who perhaps was the leader in planning his death. One by one he kissed his brothers who had once tied his hands and laughed at his cries for mercy. He showed his forgiving love for them all. Then they relaxed and began to talk with this amazing brother of theirs.

## **ISRAEL MOVES TO EGYPT**

Joseph's brothers returned home and told their father that Joseph was alive and wanted them to come to him in Egypt in the land of Goshen. They were presented to Pharaoh, who was kind to them. Israel lived the rest of his life in joy and in comfort.

## **THE BROTHERS ARE AFRAID**

After Israel died and was buried in Canaan, the brothers began to be fearful of Joseph. Now that their father was dead, they wondered if Joseph would take revenge on them. They were suspicious of Joseph and did not understand the nature of forgiveness. They found it hard to believe he could fully forgive and forget their sins. They needed the assurance of full pardon.

The brothers sent messengers to Joseph to plead their case. They humbled themselves again before Joseph, placing their lives unconditionally in his power.

## **JOSEPH'S REACTION TO HIS BROTHERS FEAR**

Joseph was deeply wounded in his heart over their suspicions of his motives. He wept because they had not fully trusted him nor received his forgiveness. Because of the guilt they had carried in their hearts for so long, they could not believe Joseph's sincerity.

Joseph told his brothers not to be afraid. He reminded them that he was not God. He was not their judge. He would not try to play God's part in punishing them. Only God could administer justice. They should fear God, not him. Joseph reminded the brothers that though they had intended to do to him evil, God had taken their evil and turned it into good. He assured them of

his continued love. He promised to provide for them during the rest of the famine.

Joseph knew that God's plan is bigger than the events, even in the life of one man. Yet God can take those events, even though they seem bad, and can work out his good plan for that man and for others. Joseph was at peace because he was under God. He could trust God with his life and with the lives of his brothers. He had no need to punish anyone. His part was to provide for God's covenant people. And he would do what God had planned for him.

### JOSEPH IS A PICTURE OF JESUS

Joseph provides us with a beautiful picture of Jesus Christ, our Elder Brother. We have all betrayed him and rejected him by our selfishness. We have all mocked him and sold him for the pleasures of this life.

He suffered for us and because of us. We may believe he is dead. Yet he is alive. He has been exalted as King of Kings. He is in a position to forgive us and provide for us. But his love demands a change of heart, a turning from our jealousy, our hatred, our selfishness.

As long as we continue in our self-sufficiency, our stubbornness, our excuses, he remains a stern ruler to us. Once we freely admit our wrong and cry out for mercy, Jesus reveals himself to us as our Saviour, our loving Elder Brother. Then he forgives us and provides for our needs. He continually demonstrates his love to us.

Our guilt causes us to doubt Christ's forgiveness. We must trust him to forgive when we repent. We do not have to continue pleading for forgiveness when we have already been forgiven.

## THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Is there someone you need to forgive? Have you freely accepted God's forgiveness in Christ? Or do you live with continual guilt because you do not trust the Lord? Are you holding a grudge against some one who wronged you? Can you expect God to use you as his instrument if you refuse to forgive others? Will you promise God that by his power you will obey what is commanded in the memory verse today?

## WHAT THIS LESSON TEACHES US

1. If we love God, we must love and forgive others, no matter what the wrong.
2. Having been forgiven, we cannot hold grudges, nor harbour hatred, nor seek revenge.
3. If we love God and others, we will show our love by helping God carry out his purpose in their lives. We will help provide their needs of salvation and of food and clothing.
4. We must not try to act as God in dealing with those who have wronged us. We must let God work in his own way. Our part is to love and forgive.
5. God is a God of action. In all things, good and evil, he is working for our ultimate good. Our part is to surrender to him.