

# GENESIS Bible Reading Schedule

## 5 Weeks

### WEEK 1

I want you to read God's Word by embracing it as God's story. You can expect two chapters in the Bible most every day. I recommend reading from the New Living Translation. Hopefully, the thoughts I've attached to each day will be helpful and the questions will enhance your journey through Genesis and beyond.

#### Immersed in Genesis

As we begin the Book of Genesis it seems fitting to begin with the Book of beginnings. Could there be any more significant themes than creation, sin, and re-creation? We will engage with these topics in the first eight chapters of the book. But the radical covenant of God really begins with Abraham. The emphasis is one of faith and the hope of God blessing the nations through his descendants; or should I say Descendant, because woven into the story of this book God provides and protects his plan to redeem the world.

A subject that highlights Genesis has always intrigued me; the significance of blessing. Giving the blessing and getting the blessing are clearly portrayed in the relational connections of especially the father to his children. The tension between Jacob and Esau is front and center by the mid-point of Genesis. There is much to learn and much to live out in regard to sharing the blessing, give or take.

Genesis begins to unveil the amazing character of our God. This is his introduction as Creator, Sustainer, Judge, and Redeemer, to mention a few. Read Genesis and be encouraged. No matter how dark the world situation seems, God has a plan. No matter how insignificant and useless you may feel, God loves you and wants to use you in his plan. Welcome to our fall launch in God's Word!

#### DAY 1 – Genesis 1 & 2

The Lord as our creator; the fact we are image bearers; and the accompanying account of creation in chapter 2 which highlights the significance of marriage and the wonder of procreation are all worthy topics to soak in. But God's intentional pattern for rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day caught my eye again. "And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation." (2:3, NLT) Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. To me, that means the Sabbath is supposed to be a gift to us from God. Maybe it is because I have experienced my 4-month sabbatical that this theme gets my attention. But rest along with slowing down our minds and our bodies seems even more important to me now. What is your response to the principle of the Sabbath? How has God stirred your heart with this first reading from Genesis?

#### DAY 2 – Genesis 3 & 4

Yesterday was such a high point for us and today was NOT. If chapter 3 is one of the darkest chapters in the Bible, then chapter 4 continues in the same way, right? If Adam & Eve get deceived by the serpent who is the devil, then Cain does too, in my opinion. If they are susceptible, then we are too. "Sin is

crouching at the door, eager to control you.” (4:7) Crouching is terminology that is used for a lion. The image applies to the serpent as well. There’s no doubt the Bible warns us about sin and its potential. The consequences for Adam, Eve and even Cain are devastating. James 1:14 & 15 affirms this truth. Take a look for yourself. Peter calls the devil a roaring lion in 1 Peter 5:8. I mention these verses so we will be alert and listen to God’s counsel to Cain... “But you must subdue it...” I encourage you to take some time to reflect on how sin might be creeping into your life. You can subdue it with the help of God. Read the last verse of chapter 4 again to remind you of what pleases the Lord.

#### DAY 3 – Genesis 5 & 6

“This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at that time, and he walked in close fellowship with God.” (6:9) After the intensity of our first four chapters, there is a bit of break. However, it wasn’t long into our reading today when we felt God’s grief. He regretted creating mankind. That’s big! I have chosen the only hopeful verse with Noah being the ONLY righteous person on the earth. And I would suggest that Noah brings light to the darkness. In this way, he becomes a forerunner to the Messiah, Jesus. Peter highlights Noah in 1 Peter 3:20 & 2 Peter 2:5. Noah gives us hope because he lived righteously and obediently in a godless world. So, what does that mean? It is also possible for you & me; we even have the Holy Spirit to help us. The last verse of chapter 6 is again worth highlighting because it is a profound reality, in my thinking, that with the pressure and ridicule Noah might receive, he did everything the Lord commanded him to do. How does Noah inspire you?

#### DAY 4 – Genesis 7 & 8

What do you think about the Ark; the Flood? The Ark represents the preservation of the Lord, right?! The Flood represents the judgment of the Lord. The flood was used to punish and separate people from their Maker. The Ark provided safety and provision as the Lord preserved Noah and his family. “When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. In those days, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:26 & 27, NLT) The Lord said he would never destroy mankind like that again (8:21). But the Word should include a qualifier; he will never do it again until the end. The Ark and the Flood are a foreshadowing of the culmination of the age and Christ’s return. How does that strike you?

#### DAY 5 – Genesis 9 & 10

How do we interpret Noah’s lapse of judgment? “One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside the tent.” (9:21) After elevating Noah because of his obedience, this verse is obviously disappointing. Was he surprised by the potency of the wine? Did he let his guard down? After many years of perseverance and determination to build the Ark, possibly he gave in to curiosity, temptation, and the flesh. But the passage does not elaborate on the topic but emphasizes the shame and disrespect that Noah’s youngest son displayed by viewing his father’s nakedness. The miraculous deliverance provided by God through the Ark did not take away the human tendency to sin. Plus, one sin led to another as a father stumbles, so too his son. Do you have any takeaways from these two chapters?

Friends, I plan to prepare five reading days each week allowing you to catch up on the weekend.

## WEEK 2

This week we are introduced to Abram. His story of faith is one of the most significant in the Bible. In Hebrews 11, which is the faith chapter, Abraham gets the most attention. By chapter 15 in Genesis, we will read why Abram pleased God; it was his faith. No wonder Abraham's descendants will be God's people and the Savior of the world will come through this chosen nation. Just think, this is the unfolding of God's plan to form a people for Himself. The Lord started the nation of Israel in order to have a dedicated people who would keep his ways alive in the world, proclaim to the world what He is like, and prepare the world for the birth of the Messiah. Let's meet Abram!

### DAY 1 – Genesis 11 & 12

There were plenty of disappointments in the first ten chapters of Genesis so I don't want to focus on Babel because of it. But there is an obvious word for us about human pride and making a name for ourselves. It is something to think about, for sure. However, Abram is my guy. He is chosen by the Lord to receive the covenant blessing of promise from God Himself. "I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others." (12:2) I think there is a fascinating comparison to the people building a tower for their own fame and Abram being chosen to make the name of the Lord great. Abram's obedience will be seen time and again showing us why he was God's choice. At every turn, Abram would say "yes" to the Lord. Do you know that the Lord wants to bless you? But the prerequisite that Abram reveals about God's blessing is surrounded by faith, lived out in obedience, and recognized with worship as he builds an altar to the Lord each time God reveals Himself. What does it mean to you to be blessed to be a blessing?

### DAY 2 – Genesis 13 & 14

As we read two chapters in Genesis each day, there is much to notice and contemplate. My spiritual practice is to focus on one highlight or maybe two at the most. The introduction of Melchizedek is the most surprising and fascinating aspect of chapter 14 for me. "And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine." (14:18) The name Melchizedek means king of righteousness. His entry into the story wouldn't be that significant to me if it weren't for his placement in the Book of Hebrews (HB 7:1-3) Of course, we appreciate the city named Salem but, in this case, it is most likely referring to Jerusalem. He is said to be a priest of God Most High, "El Elyon." There appears to have been an expectation that later kings of Jerusalem should resemble him (see Psalm 110:4) Hebrews tells us that Jesus Christ belongs to the order of Melchizedek. Some scholars would suggest that Melchizedek was the appearance on earth of the pre-incarnate Christ in a temporary bodily form. Melchizedek's affirmation of Abram and recognition that God gave Abram the victory all point to God's plan to elevate Abraham as the father of God's people. This is especially inspiring to me. What inspired you in our reading for today?

### DAY 3 – Genesis 15 & 16

"And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith." (15:6) As with our previous readings, there are many possibilities for reflection and application. Hagar's insights into "the God who sees" also seemed special to me. But the verse I chose is quoted in the New Testament five times and is surely worth a moment of pause. "And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him." (HB 11:6) Two verses later the author of Hebrews writes about Abraham and his faith for 12 verses. But the significance of faith is that God declares a person righteous because of their sincere faith. That becomes monumental for us because we could never live completely

righteous lives and neither did Abram. The beauty of Christ is that through faith God sees the righteousness of Christ in us because we have placed our faith in Jesus. There are many references for this truth but let me give at least one in Romans 3:22. How does God recognizing you as righteous through Christ empower you to live righteously?

#### DAY 4 – Genesis 17 & 18

I believe these two chapters are rich in meaning but nothing gets my attention more than Abraham's prayer. "Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?" (18:25) Do you realize how close Abraham had to be to the Lord and speak to him so directly and boldly? That has caused me to really contemplate the message found in these verses. The interchange is what fascinates me the most. I, for one, will often keep talking in prayer which doesn't allow me to hear any response from God. But the bottom line for me is that God doesn't change, however, in prayer, Abraham does. I do believe that through sincere spiritual prayer God has the power to change me. The Lord knew that there were not ten righteous in the city, but he was merciful enough to allow Abraham to intercede. I appreciate that Abraham is pressing in through prayer, believing God's heart to be merciful. Abraham believes in the mercy of God but also declares that he is the Judge of all the earth. You see, there are lessons to be learned through this prayer exchange. What might be one takeaway for you?

#### DAY 5 – Genesis 19 & 20

These two chapters are separate in topic but connected by the evidence of human sin. Obviously, Sodom and Gomorrah live on as examples of the extreme sexual perversion that existed which was unacceptable to God. Sexual sin and addiction are still staining the lives of people everywhere. Chapter 19 becomes a historical warning from God. Lot and his daughter had been influenced by the company they kept as they lived surrounded by such wickedness. Their selfish pursuits ignored obedience to God. But chapter 20 moves me personally because our man Abraham has a reoccurring sin. He lies about his wife again. He did so in chapter 12 also. Both times God mercifully rescued Sarah and protected Abraham. How could Abraham believe God so deeply and yet fear for his life as if God wasn't strong enough to protect him? "Abraham replied, 'I thought, this is a godless place. They will want my wife and kill me to get her.'" (20:11) Abraham thought it would be more effective to deceive Abimelech than to trust God to work in the king's life. The story reveals that the King and his people actually feared God. Abraham perceived things wrongly because of fear. In what ways are you vulnerable to repeating certain sins? When might fear outweigh faith in your life?

## WEEK 3

The story of Isaac begins this week. He is the child of the promise and that makes his character so fascinating. His parents are 90 & 100 years old when he is born. I like what Hebrews said about Abraham, Isaac's father: "And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them." (Hebrews 11:12) The name Isaac means, "he laughs," which can seem too casual but represents the surprising way God works so much so that what he does causes laughter. Our story continues with the faithfulness of God to honor his covenant promises in surprising ways.

#### DAY 1 – Genesis 21 & 22

If you are like me, you are enjoying the story of Genesis because it is God's story. The miracle of Isaac's birth coincides with his father on a journey to Mt. Moriah to sacrifice him even though he is the promised child. The high point of chapter 21 pivots drastically with Isaac being bound on the altar by verse 9 in chapter 22. The story of sacrifice would be woven into all of Scripture leading to the ultimate, once and for all, sacrifice. "Abraham named the place (Mt. Moriah) Yahweh-Yireh (which means 'the Lord will provide'). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: 'On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.'" (22:14) I have always noticed the connection with Abraham sacrificing his only son and the Father God doing the same thing. But more recently I learned that the land of Moriah centers on Jerusalem with Solomon building the temple of the Lord on Mt. Moriah (2 Chron. 3:1). As much as I gravitate to the idea of Mt. Moriah being Mt. Calvary, Calvary was outside the city of Jerusalem and the mount is still associated with the temple mount within the city. However, the provision of the ram points to a substitute for the sacrifice instead of Isaac. So too, Jesus was our substitute provided by the Lord Himself. There is much to appreciate and meditate upon in these two chapters. How has God directed your thoughts?

#### DAY 2 – Genesis 23 & 24

I would title chapter 24, "A Day in the Life of a Servant." So often in the Bible story, we read about well-known characters who in our estimation are famous. They play a huge role and are elevated by God. But we don't even know the name of Abraham's servant, only that he is the oldest. I might suggest that he had been faithful in the small things and now Abraham is entrusting him with something especially significant. I don't perceive the servant as having huge faith but his dependence on God is clearly his strongest attribute. His journey is covered in prayer, right?! He asks God to reveal his choice through a fairly narrow window, wouldn't you say? GN 24:14 uncovers the private prayer of the servant. May she offer me a drink and may she also offer to water my camels. From my vantage point, the possibilities are slim. Would you say 10%? The servant is a stranger; he is a man; he is a foreigner. Three strikes and you are out. But his request parallels the kind of person he would want to find. A kind, servant young lady who also is courageous. Rebekah is God's choice as she fulfills the prayer of a servant who trusts God. The servant is the hero and gives us a tangible example to follow. His gratitude and worship of the Lord is also noteworthy. What do you learn from the servant's example?

#### DAY 3 – Genesis 25 & 26

There are two verses in chapter 26 that are of particular interest to me: "When the men who lived there asked Isaac about his wife, Rebekah, he said, 'She is my sister.' He was afraid to say, 'She is my wife.' He thought, 'They will kill me to get her, because he is so beautiful.'" (26:7) Like father like son, so Isaac lies about his wife just like his father did twice in chapters 12 & 20. But listen to this verse, "Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the Lord." (26:25) Abraham did the same thing time and again to express his devotion and gratitude to God. In one way, Abraham "rubbed off" on his son in a negative and sinful way but Isaac also followed the example of his father with worship and devotion to the Lord signifying appreciation for God's blessings. I have always believed that parents do influence their children intentionally and unintentionally. That reality has made a big impression on me and has shaped how much I want to be the right example for my kids and grandkids. But as much as Isaac and Rebekah would want to influence their son Esau, he made many poor choices that saddened their hearts. (26:35) How have your parents influenced you for the good? How would you assess your sense of legacy by passing on the unchanging principles of God to your children, both if they are young or even as adults?

#### DAY 4 – Genesis 27 & 28

My observation of our reading today may be too speculative but I think my insights about Isaac are worth contemplating. Isaac has favoritism for Esau, no question. But does that align with God's desires?

I think not. Human sin displayed by both Rebekah and Jacob would lead to God's outcomes. That is a "mouthful" worth chewing on, wouldn't you say?! God would have his way in spite of the crazy human deception that fills these verses. In chapter 27, Isaac is sad and disappointed with how the story unfolds. But I perceive that Isaac began to soften his heart to God's plan rather than his selfish desires. It leads to a beautiful blessing that affirms God's original covenant with Abraham: "May God Almighty (El-Shaddai) bless you and give you many children (How does 12 sons sound, not to mention daughters as well?). And may your descendants multiply and become many nations! May God pass on to you and your descendants the blessing he promised to Abraham. May you own this land where you are now living as a foreigner, for God gave this land to Abraham." (28:3-4) That is an especially powerful blessing. He did not hold back, because he now knew what God wanted. Isaac shares a pure and legitimate blessing with his son who will be known as Israel, the nation of God's people and the pathway for the Promised One. Do my preferences and opinions align with the Lord or do they ignore the Lord? How do you respond to these intriguing chapters?

#### DAY 5 – Genesis 29 & 30

What do you remember most about Rachel and Leah? It probably could be summarized like this: Rachel was beautiful and Leah was not. And because of that, Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. But the Lord took notice of Leah which is more important than any human love. "When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he enabled her to have children, but Rachel could not conceive." (29:31) I live in a world of appearance with this philosophy, "how things look on the outside is more important than how we are in the inside." I may be wrong about what I am about write, but I think Rachel was rather shallow. The story of Genesis attributes jealousy to her, a demanding attitude, a selfish disposition, and the willingness to steal from her father for her own benefit (chapter 31). We know that the Lord cares about our inner life and attitude more than our external attractiveness. So, think of this; Leah birthed many children, one of them being Judah who would carry on the line of the Messiah. This is an example of how God champions the cause of the poor and oppressed as he exalted Leah, the mother of Judah's tribe, and also the pleasure of birthing Levi (her third son) who would carry on the priestly line of God's people. We know that Rachel was blessed with two sons but died giving birth to Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob. Like Jacob, I think we would choose Rachel but God exalted Leah in more far-reaching ways, right!? How does our preoccupation with the external influence us in unhealthy ways?

## WEEK 4

This is week four of five in the Book of Genesis. Genesis 31 to 40 is sure to be just as intriguing as our previous readings. For most of this week, we will read more about Jacob and his family. Jacob wrestles with God; Jacob is reunited with his brother Esau; Jacob loses his favorite wife; Jacob also favors a son above the others which eventually causes him deep remorse. The lessons will reveal themselves as we progress through these compelling stories.

#### DAY 1 – Genesis 31 & 32

Have you ever heard this: "What goes around comes around!" Jacob treated Esau poorly with deception and now Laban treats Jacob poorly in a similar way. Jacob operated with deceit too often. This would travel with him and his sons would be prone to lie as well. But Jacob knew his ultimate hope was in the Lord and he wrestle with the angel of the Lord all night. "Then the man said, 'Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.'" (32:26) Jacob, the deceitful fighter, could fight no more. When his assailant fought him as man to man, Jacob could hold his own. But like so many of his own rivals, he had now more than met his match. Jacob had lived a lifetime of struggles and

wrestling. But now it was time to change which Jacob wanted deep in his soul. He did not let go until God gave him a new name. The deceiver of man became the wrestler with God. Jacob would be called Israel exemplifying the lasting change that the Lord can produce. We will read about the favor of God in Jacob's life in chapter 33, as he meets his unpredictable brother, Esau. God is with Jacob in a deeper way. Isn't that what you want also? If you tried to describe how the Lord has changed you what might be your name now?

#### DAY 2 – Genesis 33 & 34

The outcome of chapter 33 is definitely unexpected. Esau was bigger, stronger, and full of memories to fuel his revenge. But Esau is gracious to his brother and responds completely differently than you and I would have guessed. This is none other than God's favor on the newly reformed deceiver who displayed humility before his brother and his clan. But the story that got my attention the most is found in the next chapter. It is more than upsetting and teaches how NOT to respond. The brothers were too willing to be deceptive and lie about their intentions. Their slaughter of all the males and their plunder of the city of Shechem was not justice, but brutal and excessive revenge. Verse 30 says, "Afterwards Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have ruined me! You've made me stink among all the people of this land...'" Nonetheless, God would protect Jacob and his family as we read in chapter 35:5. The sin of these two sons would have far-reaching results as Jacob would curse these boys rather than bless them before he dies. (49:5-7) Anger is particularly dangerous because it can motivate us to do something that could destroy our testimony. I hate what the prince of Shechem did to Dinah but what transpired was equally shameful. The Lord clearly tells us He is the one to avenge injustice. Please read Romans 12:17-21. Do you understand the importance of these words? How so?

#### DAY 3 – Genesis 35 & 36

Obviously, I have more thoughts about chapter 35 than 36 but I did discover something interesting. Esau's sons were born in the land of Canaan before he moved to Seir. By contrast, Jacob's children were almost all born outside the land but then moved into it. God was giving the land to Jacob and his descendants and so made room for them by God prompting Esau to move to a different place. It is clear from chapter 35 that Jacob would carry on the promises of God to live in the land the Lord had provided. Jacob was confident because the One who promised is El-Shaddai, God ALMIGHTY. All the names of God are inspiring but El-Shaddai stirs my heart the most because it literally means, "The God who is more than enough." (35:11) But also the root word for Shaddai is "shad" and it means breast. The Almighty is also nurturing and it points to how God blesses the patriarchs with children who represent the fulfillment of God's covenant to Abraham. As I was meditating on this rich title for God, it gave me the assurance that the Lord is completely sufficient. The Lord told the Apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 COR 12:9) Shaddai also points to God's power (GN 17:1; 28:3; 43:14; 48:3; and 49:25). How does God's name, El-Shaddai, encourage you; challenge you?

#### DAY 4 – Genesis 37 & 38

Who doesn't know about the story of Joseph with his outlandish dreams and his multi-color robe of honor from his father, Jacob? (Chapter 37) Surely my thoughts would center on Joseph and not Judah. However, Judah's story is another example of how flawed the descendants of Abraham could be. We will have several days on the life of Joseph and only catch the significance of Judah in chapter 44 and the extravagant blessing from Jacob to his son, Judah in GN 49:8-12! Also, our God again uses the unlikely to carry out his plan. In Matthew 1:3, we see Tamar's name in the ancestry of Jesus. Tamar used deception to get her way and Judah played the hypocrite by announcing Tamar's condemnation (38:24). The mystery and drama in this chapter have a surprising set of circumstances that ultimately align with God's

plan. This story seems awkward at best following the introduction of Joseph. Joseph would seem to be the more likely candidate for carrying on the messianic hope through his family. But chapter 38 gives us the unusual background of Judah's family and how he would rise to prominence in God's plan. But something to think about: Joseph is the key to moving God's people to Egypt. As Jacob's family was living in Canaan assimilation with the people of that land was becoming increasingly evident. But God was at work behind the scenes preparing Israel's family to move to Egypt. The Egyptians were strict separatists (43:32). The truth is the Israelites would retain their unique identity better in Egypt than in Canaan. Is God at work behind the scenes in your life? How does that affect your response to God?

#### DAY 5 – Genesis 39 & 40

Most likely it took you 10-15 minutes to read these two chapters. But the historical setting reveals that these two chapters last for over ten years. It is important to realize that Joseph's imprisonment is no short jail sentence but rather a long time in an Egyptian prison. Of course, God gave Joseph favor in spite of the difficulty he faced every day. "And please remember me and do me a favor when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place." (40:14) Joseph made the best of his incarceration but we can know it was far from easy. In verse 15, he literally calls prison "the pit." This points back to when his brothers threw him into the pit. After helping the chief cupbearer, he remains in prison for two "full" years, as it reads in 41:1. He has been treated unfairly with injustice, right?! His brothers sold him into slavery and Potiphar's wife accuses him of something he did not do. This would make the situation twice as hard because as he says in verse 15, "I'm here in prison but I did nothing to deserve it." The circumstances were awful and the reason he is there is false. This is enough to want to give up. But you know that God was doing something very deep in him. God was preparing Joseph for something beyond his imagination. Joseph would need to realize that it was only because of God's grace and his authority that he would rise in prominence. A very significant verse in my journey is found in Hebrews 12:7-11, "No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way." (HB 12:11) How do you respond to God's loving discipline? How might he be disciplining you right now?

## WEEK 5

As I am sure you know this week begins with a miraculous turnaround for Joseph. It is a fascinating story as Joseph's teenage dreams come true. His brothers will end up bowing down to him just as he shared at age 17 in chapter 37. The sequence of events is also very fascinating. I am impressed with the restraint of Joseph as he recognizes his brothers. But it is clear to me that Joseph wondered if they had changed at all. What do you think he will discover? I imagine that you know a lot about this part of Genesis since Joseph's story has been highlighted in modern times with theater productions of his life. But I believe God has some new insights for us and some important steps of application. This is sure to be a marvelous culmination of the Book of Beginnings.

#### DAY 1 – Genesis 41 & 42

Do you think that Joseph might have felt significant disappointment and possibly blamed God for his unjust incarceration? He shows no inclination except that he wishes to be released as we read about in the last chapter. "It is beyond my power to do this," Joseph replied. "But God can tell you what it means and set you at ease." (41:16) Joseph stands before the most powerful leader in the world and he still uses the opportunity to point to the credibility of God. He continues his strong allegiance to the Lord with these words in verse 25, "Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do." This is not only the longest chapter but it represents the most



compelling aspect of the story: Joseph testified boldly about the Lord and God's authority which inspired him to continue speaking with confidence as he then freely shares his advice with Pharaoh (verses 33 - 36). This represents a principle that highlights faith in the most stressful of times with boldness before man and humility before God. We have been learning about boldness and humility in the sermon series from 1 Timothy as Paul admonishes Timothy to possess both. Joseph definitely exemplifies both, right? Joseph made sure that he gave credit to God. We must be careful to do the same. When is the last time you spoke words of faith and allegiance to God before people? How might you be more eager to do so?

#### DAY 2 – Genesis 43 & 44

There is no doubt Joseph is testing his brothers in these two chapters. How would they respond? The most noticeable change of character is found in Judah. "So please, my lord, let me stay here as a slave instead of the boy and let the boy return with his brothers." (44:33) Judah was willing to give up his family, his future, and his freedom. This heartfelt plea from Judah gives us some clear insight into Judah as God's choice to carry on the line of the Messiah as an ancestor of David and also of Jesus, of course. I am drawn to Judah and his courage to follow through on his promise to his father (43:8-10). What Judah was willing to do is nothing short of laying down his life. The conditions of a slave would be a terrible fate. It reminds me of the words of Jesus: "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13) Previously, any association with Judah might have raised questions. But the writer of Revelation points to the elevated role of Judah, "Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir of David's throne, has won the victory." (Revelation 5:5) The transformation of Joseph is clearly seen in the story but Judah has a similar heartfelt change that reflects the work of God in his life. I think Joseph saw what he was looking for in Judah. He thought to himself, "My brothers have changed" and their courage softens the heart of Joseph as we will read tomorrow. How do you want God to change you? How have you seen God change you?

#### DAY 3 – Genesis 45 & 46

"But don't be upset, and don't be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives." (45:5) Some would suggest that this is the theme of Genesis: The Lord orchestrates all the affairs of mankind. Genesis 50:20 says it even more clearly. This is often referred to as God's sovereignty. Joseph explained that God had been working through all the circumstances and human acts to bring about his plan. The Apostle Paul highlights God's sovereignty in the memorable words of Romans 8:28. "He causes all things to work for the good..." Joseph could boldly share this with his brothers because he had learned to trust God. It might have taken 13 years of incarceration but he truly believed that God was working for his good and the wellbeing of others. After preaching about the beauty of gender this past Sunday, I think that Joseph portrays the confidence and tenderness of a godly man. He is bold and humble at the same time. Joseph's example stirs my heart as a man. I think we could equally say that Joseph was transformed into a man after God's own heart. Psalm 105:16-22 summarizes the journey of Joseph and the legacy of his life. What aspect of Joseph's life impresses you the most? How might you follow his example?

#### DAY 4 – Genesis 47 & 48

There is one sentence about Jacob in Hebrews 11, the faith chapter. "It was by faith that Jacob, when he was old and dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and bowed in worship as he leaned on his staff." (11:21) The evidence of Jacob's faith is seen throughout his journey preparing him to be the father of a great nation. God changed his name to Israel which elevates his place in God's plan but Hebrews 11 only refers to him blessing his grandsons. The inclusion of Ephraim and Manasseh clearly affirms the significance of Joseph in the history of God's people. Yesterday I highlighted the life of Joseph and today our reading has a similar theme with chapter 48 placing Joseph's sons as a permanent feature of the

Jewish nation. The nature of Jacob's blessing follows a similar pattern that deviates from tradition. The younger is blessed over the older beginning with Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, and now Ephraim over Manasseh. Many years later, Ephraim became the leading tribe in the northern kingdom, superior to the tribe of Manasseh. How often does God elevate the lesser over the greater? It is a Scriptural pattern that says, "the last shall be first." I could give you example after example of this storyline in the Bible. But why don't you think of a few examples?! My example is David, the youngest of the 8 sons of Jesse. The Lord delights in exalting the humble and promises to bring down the haughty. I am sure you feel like an unlikely choice for God's special work in you and through you. However, I encourage you to notice how God has blessed you and elevated you by his amazing grace. Amen!

#### DAY 5 – Genesis 49 & 50

This is not only our last day for this week but it is the culmination of our time in Genesis. There are several ideas swirling around in my mind. First, was the fact that God told Abraham that his descendants would be oppressed in a foreign land for 400 years as slaves. (15:13) But God's promise says that his people would come away with great wealth. Listen to this from Exodus 12:36, "The Lord caused the Egyptians to look favorably on the Israelites, and gave them whatever they asked for. So, they stripped the Egyptians from their wealth." I am thinking of how God used their time in Egypt, as hard as it was, to form a strong and united people. That idea has impacted me. Secondly, Genesis 50:20 declares a timeless principle that is woven throughout God's Word, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people." These are the words of Joseph as he assures his brothers of his forgiveness and his understanding of all that has happened in his life. He declares that God is sovereign and always has the best plan even if suffering is part of that plan. I could think on that truth for a long time. I encourage you to write some thoughts down on how that speaks to you. Finally, I can't end the Book of Genesis without emphasizing the evidence of the blessing from God to the patriarchs and then the patriarchs to their children. Chapter 49 is all about blessing but not all of it is positive, right? The importance of Blessing begins in Genesis 12 and continues right up to the conclusion of our reading in Genesis. Nowhere else in the Bible does it play such a predominant role but the idea of legacy and passing on the covenant have a similar emphasis. Dr. Gary Smalley wrote a classic book on the importance of blessing people in your lives, especially your children. I want to end with the 5 elements outlined in his book: 1) Meaningful Touch; 2) Spoken Words; 3) Expressing High Value; 4) Picturing a Special Future; 5) An Active Commitment. I am sure you notice these in the stories of Genesis even though the relationships are far from ideal. They seem to get at least one thing right: Blessing those who carry on the name, the faith, the truth, and the traditions is an especially important principle to live by. Do any of these three ideas I have shared with you for today get your attention? Why? Quite frankly, I could write on and on about the impact of Genesis but I will keep the rest to myself. You are probably grateful for that because this installment has gone on long enough. May God's blessing lift your heart today!