

# GENESIS

## The Hope

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## GROUP LIFE | AN INTRODUCTION

Welcome to community. We are made for life together, but life together can get messy so here are some suggestions to make the time in your group fun and life-changing.

### **BE ATTENTIVE**

We live in a loud, distracted world full of social media, text messaging and selfies. For the short time in your group, silence your phone and put it away. When someone is sharing, lean in to listen and ask questions. When you share, keep on topic and seek to be concise so that others can also share. Avoid interrupting or dominating the conversation. We want to learn from one another and we learn the most when we listen.

### **COME PREPARED**

The emphasis of this time is to know God and to grow in our life with Him. When everyone does the homework, the discussion promises to be rich and deep. Pray before you come, anticipating what God will do in and through your group.

### **WHAT GROUP TIME IS AND IS NOT**

A healthy group creates a safe place to be vulnerable as well as confidence that what is shared will not leave the group or be received with judgment. This is a time to grow in love for God and for one another. This is not a time to fix one another or give unsolicited advice.

**Give feedback that is:** affirming (“thanks for trusting us with your story”), empathetic (“I’ve done the same thing”) and attentive (“can you say more about how that made you feel?”).

**Avoid feedback that is:** condemning (“oh my, I have never heard of anyone doing that”), counseling/fixing (“you should; have you tried; you need to stop”) or all about you (“that reminds me of when I \_\_\_\_”). Also be careful about encouragement that is given too soon. When someone suffers pain or deep loss it’s not the time to say that “it will all be okay,” or “God has a plan” or “this has happened to me and it served an amazing purpose in my life.” It’s usually best to just say, “I’m so sorry. That is so hard.”

### **GET TO KNOW YOUR GROUP**

We encourage connection outside your group time! Grab coffee, go for walks, talk, pray, check-in with one another. The work God is doing doesn’t stop once you leave your group, and even a simple text of encouragement can be exactly what someone needs in the middle of a messy week.

[www.womensbiblestudyLA.com](http://www.womensbiblestudyLA.com)

## USING THIS GUIDE

Studying Genesis for Biblical Understanding and Life-change

**Here's how to get the most out of your time:**

### SEEK GOD

God is the focus of our study. The intent of the author of Genesis is to put the beauty and hope of God on display as he shows the mess humanity created through misplaced worship and disobedience.

Settle into your study each day and pause to acknowledge God's presence with you. Ask God to speak to you. Ask again when you gather with your group to share what you are learning, experiencing and practicing.

Expect God to be present. Christian spirituality is entering into the reality that God is always present, always seeing, always hearing, always knowing and always moving toward us.

### SET A PLACE AND A TIME, FIVE DAYS A WEEK

Right now, determine when and where you will meet with God. Put it on your calendar. Guard this time like you guard time for your favorite person, event or show. Each week is divided into five days of studying and practicing the truths of Genesis. Be sure to set aside 20-30 minutes each day.

### GATHER TOGETHER

Gather some friends to meet weekly to discuss how you are experiencing God, his word and life-change through your study of Genesis. Pray for each other. Listen to each other. Make it a safe time by not trying to fix one another with unsolicited advice. Be sure to be fully present with each other, knowing that God is fully present with you.

### EXPECT CHANGE

When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, a miracle takes place—God, the Holy Spirit, comes to live in us. Jesus told his followers that his Father would send the Holy Spirit to be *with* them and *in* them (John 14:17). The Holy Spirit is committed to our transformation—he instructs us with truth, he convicts us against unrighteousness, he empowers us for the mission of God and he grows us in fruitfulness (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control).

### FOLLOW THE TEACHING

[www.womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://www.womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources)

[YouTube.com—Women's Bible Study LA](https://www.youtube.com/Women's Bible Study LA)

For resources and questions contact: [women@cachurch.com](mailto:women@cachurch.com)

## A PREVIEW OF EACH WEEK

This is the third study in a series of three on the book of Genesis. Don't worry, each of the three studies can be done separately. But if you did the first two, you'll notice this study is different. We're covering 38 chapters and that means there is a lot to learn in just seven weeks. Each week of this guide is divided into five days of study.

### **Day One—Bible Observations**

Genesis is historical narrative so we have to read bigger chunks to get a comprehensive understanding. Day one we make general observations guided by a chart. We end the time with a prayer of worship to God. To best *study* the Bible, we recommend NIV, ESV or NASB translation (you can find them all at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)).

### **Day Two—Going Deeper**

Day two we consider questions, culture, commentary, context, and cross-references to best understand the Bible.

### **Day Three—Put Yourself in the Story**

Putting yourself in the story is a wonderful spiritual practice. This is a prayer exercise, however, and not meant to lead to the ultimate meaning or intent of the passage. Be careful that you don't use this as a tool for Bible interpretation! Use it as a tool for worship and application. There is only one true meaning of a passage or verse, but many applications.

### **Day Four—Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament**

As Christians, we read the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus. We understand the Bible to be the message of God's rescue and grace, ultimately accomplished in Jesus.

*And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus explained to them what was said in all the [Old Testament] Scriptures concerning himself.*

**Luke 24:25-27**

### **Day Five—Worship**

Day five we look back and respond in worship. We also meditate on a passage of Scripture to help engage God with awe and wonder. The word used for meditation in Psalm 1:2 gives the picture of a lion gnawing on a bone. If you have a dog, you know she can gnaw on one bone for hours, just sitting with it, working it over and over with her jaw. Christian meditation is taking a word, verse or passage from the Bible and sitting with it, working it over and over in our mind, and allowing God to speak to us through his written word.

### **Abram v. Abraham | Sarai v. Sarah**

In Genesis 12-16, Abraham and Sarah are called Abram and Sarai. Then, in Genesis 17, God changes their names to Abraham and Sarah. We will refer to them as Abraham and Sarah throughout this guide.

### **Dig In With Your Group—Participating in Community**

Church isn't just a weekly meeting, it's a community of Christ-followers helping one another grow in the ways of Jesus. Together, we want to imitate how Jesus thinks, obeys, serves, loves and listens to the voice of the Father. We don't do this study in isolation, but with others who are also seeking to know and follow God.

### **Pray, Pray and Pray**

Begin each day with a prayer, asking God to guide you and transform you as you study his word.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS

The Beauty | The Mess | **The Hope**

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## **An Introduction to Genesis by Eugene Peterson**

First, God. God is the subject of life. God is foundational for living. If we don't have a sense of the primacy of God, we will never get it right, get life right, get our lives right. Not God at the margins; not God as an option; not God on the weekends. God at center and circumference; God first and last; God, God, God.

Genesis gets us off on the right foot. Genesis pulls us into a sense of reality that is God-shaped and God-filled. It gives us a vocabulary for speaking accurately and comprehensively about our lives, where we come from and where we are going, what we think and what we do, the people we live with and how to get along with them, the troubles we find ourselves in and the blessings that keep arriving.

Genesis uses words to make a foundation that is solid and true. Everything we think and do and feel is material in a building operation in which we are engaged all our life long. There is immense significance in everything that we do. Our speech and our actions and our prayers are all, every detail of them, involved in this vast building operation comprehensively known as the Kingdom of God. But we don't build the foundation. The foundation is given. The foundation is firmly in place.

Jesus concluded his most famous teaching by telling us that there are two ways to go about our lives—we can build on sand or we can build on rock. No matter how wonderfully we build, if we build on sand it will all fall to pieces like a house of cards. We build on what is already there, on the rock. Genesis is a verbal witness to that rock: God's creative acts, God's intervening and gracious judgments, God's call to a life of faith, God's making covenant with us.

But Genesis presents none of this to us as an abstract, bloodless "truth" or "principle." We are given a succession of stories with named people, people who loved and quarreled, believed and doubted, had children and married, experienced sin and grace. If we pay attention, we find that we ourselves are living variations on these very stories: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and his sons, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Joseph and his brothers. The stories show clearly that we are never outsiders or spectators to anything in "heaven and earth." God doesn't work impersonally from space; he works with us where we are, as he finds us. No matter what we do, whether good or bad, we continue to be part of everything that God is doing. Nobody can drop out—there's no place to drop out to. So we may as well get started and take our place in the story—at the beginning.

# GENESIS

## Hope in the Covenantal God

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**Notes Page:** Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Hope in the Covenantal God*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

**Opening Video:** <https://goo.gl/2LmJHd>

### Genesis 15

<sup>1</sup>After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

*"Do not be afraid, Abram.*

*I am your shield,  
your very great reward."*

<sup>2</sup>But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?"<sup>3</sup>And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir."

<sup>5</sup>He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.<sup>7</sup> He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

<sup>8</sup>But Abram said, "Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?"<sup>9</sup> So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."<sup>10</sup> Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.<sup>11</sup> Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

<sup>12</sup>As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.<sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there.<sup>14</sup> But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions.<sup>15</sup> You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age.<sup>16</sup> In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the

# GENESIS

## Hope in the Covenantal God

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### **Genesis Continued.**

*Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”*

<sup>17</sup>When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. <sup>18</sup>On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—<sup>19</sup>the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup>Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, <sup>21</sup>Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

### **Romans 4:1-8, 23; 5:1**

*What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, discovered in this matter? <sup>2</sup>If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. <sup>3</sup>What does Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

<sup>4</sup>Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. <sup>5</sup>However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness. <sup>6</sup>David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the one to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: <sup>7</sup>“Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. <sup>8</sup>Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

<sup>23</sup>The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, <sup>24</sup>but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. <sup>25</sup>He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. <sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,



# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO SEES

## GENESIS 16

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### DAY ONE—BIBLE OBSERVATIONS

Today we make observations directly from the passage. Because Genesis is historical narrative we have to read bigger chunks to get a comprehensive understanding. An observation is something we observe directly from the passage. If we read, “the word is a lamp unto my feet” (Psalm 119:105), a correct observation is “the word is a lamp”. An incorrect observation is “the Bible illuminates my life” — this might be true, but it’s interpretation, not observation. HT Kuist defined observation as “*impartially, intensely and fearlessly seeing things as they really are.*” We have to slow down to make observations. Read Genesis 16 and make observations by filling in this chart. What do you learn about . . .

Abraham (Abram)	Sarah (Sarai)	Hagar	God

Write a prayer of worship to God.

## DAY TWO—GOING DEEPER

Today we consider questions, culture, commentary, context, and cross-references to best understand Genesis 16.

**Questions:** Read Genesis 16 and record three questions you have about this event.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Culture and Commentary

*It is difficult today to appreciate the significance of child-bearing in ancient times. We live in an individualistic age in which we dream of individual success and achievement. That was not true in ancient times. All aspirations and dreams were for the family's success and prominence. The family was the primary identity, not your vocation, friendships, etc. Therefore there was nothing more important than to have and raise children who loved and honored you and who walked in your ways.*

*In light of this, female barrenness was considered the worst possible curse.*

*A woman in this situation could not avoid feeling like a terrible failure.*

*Sarai's proposal regarding Hagar was not original to her. Near-Eastern documents from the period indicate that this arrangement was culturally and legally acceptable. Jewish scholar, Robert Alter, explains:*

*"The tradition of English Bible versions that render Hagar a 'maid' or 'handmaiden' are misleading. The point is that Hagar belongs to Sarai as property, and the ensuing complications of their relationship build on that fundamental fact . . . The institution of surrogate maternity is well-attested in ancient Near Eastern legal documents. Living with the human consequences of the institution could be quite another matter, as the writer (of Genesis) shrewdly understands."*

*In other words, Hagar's son with Abram would belong to Sarai because Hagar was Sarai's property.*

*However, it was still a brutal, cruel and unwise custom. As Alter notes, the narrator is criticizing, not supporting, what Sarai and Abram did with Hagar.*

**Tim Keller**

As we consider God's protection of Hagar it is important to know that if Hagar does not return to Sarah, she and her son are fugitives and subject to death when found.

### Context

Read Genesis 15:1-6. What pressures on Abraham made his decision to have sex with Hagar seem reasonable?

### **Cross-References**

*Tell me, you who want to live under the law, do you know what the law actually says?*

*The Scriptures say that Abraham had two sons, one from his slave wife (Hagar) and one from his freeborn wife (Sarah). The son of the slave wife was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God's promise. But the son of the freeborn wife was born as God's own fulfillment of his promise. These two women serve as an illustration of God's two covenants.*

*The first woman, Hagar, represents Mount Sinai where people received the law that enslaved them.*

*And now Jerusalem is just like Mount Sinai in Arabia, because she and her children live in slavery to the law. But the other woman, Sarah, represents the heavenly Jerusalem.*

*She is the free woman, and she is our mother. As Isaiah said, "Rejoice, O childless woman, you who have never given birth! Break into a joyful shout, you who have never been in labor! For the desolate woman now has more children than the woman who lives with her husband!"*

*And you, dear brothers and sisters, are children of the promise, just like Isaac.*

*But you are now being persecuted by those who want you to keep the law, just as Ishmael, the child born by human effort, persecuted Isaac, the child born by the power of the Spirit.*

*But what do the Scriptures say about that? "Get rid of the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the free woman's son."*

*So, dear brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman; we are children of the free woman.*

*So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.*

### **Galatians 4:21-5:1 (TNL)**

According to Galatians, what was wrong with the reasoning and response of Abraham and Sarah to their barrenness?

What unique insights do the culture, commentary, context, and cross-references give to your understanding of Genesis 16? Do these insights answer any of your three questions?

What will you worship about God today?

### **DAY THREE—PUT YOURSELF IN THE STORY**

Putting yourself in the story is a wonderful spiritual practice. This is a prayer exercise, however, and not meant to lead to the ultimate meaning or intent of the passage. Be careful that you don't use this as a tool for Bible interpretation! Use it as a tool for worship and application. There is only one true meaning of a passage or verse, but many applications.

#### **Begin with Prayer**

*God, thank you for your word. Bring it to life for me in a new and fresh way. Help me to see myself in your word today so that I may see you more clearly. Help me to look for you. Protect me from anything not of you. I need you. I love you. Amen.*

#### **Read Slowly through Genesis 16**

Imagine you are Hagar. What are you feeling? What are you hearing? How do you respond? How do you wish you had responded? Where is God? What is God saying? What is God hearing you say?

Record your reflections and prayers (this can include surprises and distraction, words and images).

## DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: SEEING JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

As Christians, we read the Old Testament through the lens of Jesus. We understand the Bible to be the message of God's rescue and grace, ultimately accomplished in Jesus.

*And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus explained to them what was said in all the [Old Testament] Scriptures concerning himself.*

**Luke 24:25-27**

### Three Gospel Truths on Display in Genesis 16 and Questions for Reflection

**1. Salvation comes through the miraculous work of God, not self-effort.** God brought a child to Abraham and Sarah through a miracle. They were old and Sarah was barren—only God could do this work! But before God provides, Abraham and Sarah are impatient and intervene through self-effort, bringing about all kinds of problems.

What is the chaos brought about by Abraham producing a child with Hagar?

When have you been tempted to get ahead of God and seek his provision through self-effort rather than waiting for his miraculous provision?

How was Jesus' birth a similar miracle to the birth of Sarah's son, Isaac (Luke 1:26-38)?

**2. Sin separates us from God and requires his intervention.** Sarah does not break a cultural law when she offers Hagar to Abraham but she does sin. Her sin is a sin of idolatry—putting her desire for a good thing, a child, above her desire and trust of God. Like most sin, her action results in chaos, destruction and broken relationship. Very quickly she despises Hagar and resents Abraham. Jeremiah 17:9 says that sin makes "*the heart deceitful above all things.*" Keller suggests this is why, "*overly wealthy people can feel poor and abusive people always feel they are the ones being abused.*" Sin deceives and we see it not

only in Sarah, but also in Abraham who joined in the plan of self-effort, seeking to force God's hand. *"The core of sin,"* Keller says, *"is self-salvation and self-justification, seeking to do for ourselves what only God can do, seeking to be our own Savior and Lord . . . (and) from the fundamental root of self-salvation flows bitterness, blame-shifting, denial, jealousy, exploitation, injustice, classism, paranoia, family breakdown and despair."*

How have you seen sin separate you from intimacy with God?

How have you seen God intervene for your sin (Romans 5:6-11)?

**3. God is a God of love and grace.** God hears and sees the oppressed. Hagar is a woman, a slave, not a believer in God (Yahweh), and outside the chosen lineage of Abraham, but God sees her and hears her. Keller says, *"There is no indication that Hagar was seeking the God of Abram and Sarai—not after the way they treated her! But despite the poor witness of his chosen representatives, God comes to Hagar simply because he is moved by her misery and oppression (v. 11). God is so sensitive to injustice and human suffering that he 'hears' it. It 'rings in God's ears.' He is the God who notices ('who sees me,' v. 13). This was the revelation to Hagar. There is a God who notices the marginal, unimportant people. He sees their suffering and injustice and does something about it. What a contrast from the pagan gods, who were remote and only moved to action by elaborate prayers, rituals and sacrifices! A 'God who sees me' is a God of grace."*

Who is God inviting you to "see" (recognize, acknowledge, be present with) today?

Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

## DAY FIVE—WORSHIP

Look over the past four days of reflection and write three words that describe God. After writing the words, turn them into a prayer of praise to God.

God is . . .

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Meditation

The word used for meditation in Psalm 1:2 gives the picture of a lion gnawing on a bone. If you have a dog you know that she can gnaw on one bone for hours, just sitting with it, working it over and over with her jaw. Christian meditation is taking a word, verse or passage from the Bible and sitting with it, working it over and over in our mind, and allowing God to speak to us through his written word. Sit with this passage for at least five minutes—then record anything significant you hear, experience and are convinced to believe.

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven,  
Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.  
For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with  
our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way,  
just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God's throne of grace  
with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and  
find grace to help us in our time of need.*

**Hebrews 4:14-16**





# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO SEES

## GENESIS 16

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**Notes Page:** Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Hope in the God Who Sees*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

Opening Video: <https://goo.gl/IVIZak>

# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO SEES

GENESIS 16

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Notes Continued.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use this space to record the questions for discussion given at the end of the message.

# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO PROVIDES

## GENESIS 20 - 22

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### DAY ONE—BIBLE OBSERVATIONS

Read Genesis 20-22 and make observations. As you make these observations, keep in mind this theme in Genesis: God *unconditionally* fulfills his promises to Abraham to make a way to restore the world lost in Eden. We know that God *unconditionally* fulfills his promises because Abraham repeatedly fluctuates between disobedience and obedience, distrust and faith. God's fulfillment of his promises is not contingent on Abraham's character but upon his own character. Fill in the chart and record what you learn about . . .

Abraham & Sarah	Ishmael	Isaac	God

Record your prayer (it can be a prayer of confusion, praise, question or all of these things).

## DAY TWO—GOING DEEPER

Today we consider questions, culture, commentary, context, and cross-references to best understand Genesis 20-22.

**Questions:** Read Genesis 22:1-19 and record three questions you have about this event.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Culture and Commentary

*The assurance that Isaac as well as Abraham would 'come again' from the sacrifice was no empty phrase: it was Abraham's full conviction, on the ground that 'through Isaac shall your offspring be named' (21:12).*

*Hebrews 11:17-19 reveals that he was expecting Isaac to be resurrected; henceforth he would regard him as given back from the dead . . . (Concerning 21:13) For the second time (21:19), God's provision is found to be ready and waiting. Note that in this sacrifice the victim (the ram) was a substitute (instead of his son).*

**Derek Kidner** (on Genesis 22:5, 13)

*If the story of Abraham had ended with the birth of Isaac, we would have a tale of origins.*

*But in our present text, unexpected things happen. Only now do we see how serious faith is.*

*This narrative shows that we do not have a tale of origins, but a story of anguished faith . . . But it is notoriously difficult to interpret. Its difficulty begins in the aversion immediately felt for a God who will command the murder of a son . . . The narrative leads to a new disclosure of God. At the beginning, God is the 'tester' (22:1). At the end, God is the 'provider' (22:14). These two statements about God form the ultimate frame of the story. (Theologians) Calvin and Luther are candid and unflinching before this contradiction in God. Calvin says, "The command and the promise of God are in conflict." Luther says this is a "contradiction with which God contradicts himself." The promise of God is that through Isaac your descendants will be named (21:12; cf. Romans 9:7). The command of God is that Isaac must be killed.*

*It follows that there will be no descendants, no future. We are back to barrenness.*

*The entire pilgrimage from 11:30 has been for nought. Abraham has trusted the promise fully . . .*

*Can the same God who promises life also command death?*

*The (studier of the Bible) must take care not to explain, for it will not be explained. But without explanation, the text leads us to face the reality that God is God. The narrative concerns Abraham's anguished acknowledgment that God is God. The narrative may be connected to Exodus 20:11ff: The God who 'delivers' is the one who 'prohibits' any alternative God, any alternative trust. He insists on being trusted only and totally . . . God is shown to be freely sovereign just as he is graciously faithful. That God provides shows his gracious faithfulness. That God tests is a disclosure of his free sovereignty.*

**Walter Brueggemann**

Many have interpreted the moral of this story as: 'God called Abraham to murder his son, and Abraham showed his faith and submission by getting ready to do it. So we should do whatever God calls us to do.'

But this is to misunderstand the meaning of the firstborn son in Jewish thought and symbolism. If Abraham had heard a voice like God saying, 'Go and kill Sarah,' Abraham would never have done it. He would have (rightly) assumed he was hallucinating and that God wouldn't ask him to do something that was clearly wrong. But God over and over told the Hebrews that because of sinfulness, the lives of their firstborn son were automatically forfeit, though they could redeem them with sacrifice (Exodus 22:29, 34:20) or Levitical service (Numbers 3:40-41) or ransom payment (Numbers 3:46-48).

In the same way, God punished Egypt by taking their firstborn. The firstborn or heir was, in those traditional cultures, the bearer of all the family's hopes for a prosperous future. When God said that the child's (heir's) life belonged to him unless ransomed, he was saying in the most vivid possible that every family on earth owed a debt to eternal justice—the debt of sin. That is why God's commandment to Abraham was enormously painful, because it appeared he was abandoning his promise to bless Abraham and the world through a son (Hebrews 11:17-18). But the charge was not incomprehensible. God was not asking Abraham to murder his son. He was calling in Abraham's debt! And so Abraham was faced with the ultimate question: "I do owe this. Our sin means that Isaac's life is forfeit.

Yet God is a God of grace as well. How can a holy God still graciously fulfill the promise?"

**Tim Keller**

#### **Cross-References**

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.

#### **Hebrews 11:17-19**

So Moses counted all the firstborn sons of the Israelites, as the Lord commanded him. . . The Lord also said to Moses, ". . . To redeem the 273 firstborn Israelites . . . collect five shekels for each one, according to the sanctuary shekel . . . Give the money for the redemption of the additional Israelites to Aaron and his sons."

#### **Numbers 3:42-48**

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

#### **Romans 8:31-32**

What unique insights do the culture, commentary, context, and cross-references give to your understanding of Genesis 22? Do these insights answer any of your three questions?

What will you worship about God today?

## DAY THREE—PUT YOURSELF IN THE STORY

### **Begin with Prayer**

*Father, open my eyes as I put myself in your story. Help me see you. Help me experience you and hear you. Give me words and images for better understanding your beauty. I give myself to you today. Amen.*

### **Read Slowly through Genesis 22**

Imagine you are Abraham or Isaac. What are you feeling? What are you hearing? How do you respond? How do you wish you had responded? Where is God? What is God saying? What is God hearing you say?

Record your reflections and prayers (this can include surprises and distraction, words and images).

## DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: SEEING JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

### **One Giant Gospel Truth in Genesis 22 and an Invitation to Praise**

Abraham walked up a mountain with his son — believing that God was both just and gracious. He knew God was just to require a payment for sin, and he knew God was gracious to provide that payment.

*By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.*

**Hebrews 11:17-19**

Many years later, God would lead his only Son—Jesus—up into these same mountains (2 Chronicles 3). Jesus was the ultimate and true substitute for Isaac and all who place their faith in him. Read the following Scripture and reflect on Jesus as the necessary, sacrificial, substitute for our sin—providing forgiveness, freedom and new identity.

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said,  
"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

**John 1:29**

*But he (prophetically speaking of Jesus) was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted,  
yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

**Isaiah 53:5-7**

*(Jesus said:) For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,  
and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

**Mark 10:45**

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.  
He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.*

**1 Peter 3:18**

So Christ has now become the High Priest over all the good things that have come. He has entered that greater, more perfect Tabernacle in heaven, which was not made by human hands and is not part of this created world. With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer could cleanse people’s bodies from ceremonial impurity. Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our consciences from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God. For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is why he is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance God has promised them. For Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed under that first covenant.

Now when someone leaves a will, it is necessary to prove that the person who made it is dead. The will goes into effect only after the person’s death. While the person who made it is still alive, the will cannot be put into effect. That is why even the first covenant was put into effect with the blood of an animal. For after Moses had read each of God’s commandments to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, along with water, and sprinkled both the book of God’s law and all the people, using hyssop branches and scarlet wool. Then he said, “This blood confirms the covenant God has made with you.” And in the same way, he sprinkled blood on the Tabernacle and on everything used for worship. In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood.

For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

That is why the Tabernacle and everything in it, which were copies of things in heaven, had to be purified by the blood of animals. But the real things in heaven had to be purified with far better sacrifices than the blood of animals. For Christ did not enter into a holy place made with human hands, which was only a copy of the true one in heaven. He entered into heaven itself to appear now before God on our behalf. And he did not enter heaven to offer himself again and again, like the high priest here on earth who enters the Most Holy Place year after year with the blood of an animal. If that had been necessary, Christ would have had to die again and again, ever since the world began. But now, once for all time, he has appeared at the end of the age to remove sin by his own death as a sacrifice. And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, so also Christ was offered once for all time as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many people. He will come again, not to deal with our sins, but to bring salvation to all who are eagerly waiting for him.

#### **Hebrews 9:11-28 (TNL)**

Write a prayer of praise to Jesus.



## DAY FIVE—WORSHIP

Look over the past four days of reflection and write three words that describe God. After writing the words, turn them into a prayer of praise to God.

God is . . .

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Meditation

Sit with this passage for at least five minutes—then record anything significant you hear, experience and are convinced to believe.

*(Jesus said:) "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."  
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,  
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.  
For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world,  
but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned,  
but whoever does not believe stands condemned already  
because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*

**John 3:14-18**



# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO PROVIDES

GENESIS 21 - 22

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**Notes Page:** Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Hope in the God Who Provides*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO PROVIDES

GENESIS 21 - 22

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Notes Continued.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use this space to record the questions for discussion given at the end of the message.

# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO BLESSES

GENESIS 25:19 - 28:9

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## DAY ONE—BIBLE OBSERVATIONS

Read Genesis 25:19-28:9 and make observations by filling in this chart. What do you learn about each of these people and God? Pay attention to what they say and do, and what is said to them.

Isaac	Jacob	Esau	God

Record your prayer (it can be a prayer of confusion, praise, question or all of these things).

## DAY TWO—GOING DEEPER

Today we consider questions, culture, commentary, context, and cross-references to best understand Genesis 25:19-28:9.

**Questions:** Read Genesis 27 and record three questions you have about this event.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Culture and Commentary on Genesis 27 and the Concept of Blessing

*(Genesis 25:19-34 and 27:1-45) deal with two related themes . . . They concern the transmission of the promise and the inheritance from one generation to the next. There is in Genesis no one-generational faith. There is always the problem of the promise being safely entrusted to the next generation. Here, as elsewhere, that vertical move from generation to generation causes a crisis . . . In this case the crisis is the tension and rivalry in the next generation between the two brothers. Genesis does not report simply that the promise is given to the next generation, but that it is given to Jacob the younger at the expense of Esau the elder (Genesis 25:23). It has been inscrutably decreed that the younger shall receive what would have automatically (in this culture) been entrusted to the older.*

*. . . A proper interpretation of Genesis 27 requires attention to the meaning of blessing. The assumptions made by the text may seem foreign to us . . . This family in Genesis is preoccupied with blessing as though it matters more than visible things . . . Blessing is understood as a world-transforming act which cannot be denied by modern rationality. For the son as for the father, the matter of blessing is as dangerous as it is compelling.*

*The narrative presumes that symbolic actions have genuine and abiding power . . . And that spoken words (especially of a parent to a child) shape human life . . . Words here are not a matter of indifference which may be attended to or not, as is convenient . . . There is a pathos in this text, for the sons as well as for the father. It lies in the awareness that nobody wants to live a life that is unblest. Nobody wants a life without the special words and gestures that bind that life to a precious act and a promised future . . . The unblest are those left empty-handed.*

**Walter Brueggemann**

*This (scene) makes no sense to modern readers. Surely Jacob came fraudulently and therefore the agreement was null and void . . . Why couldn't Isaac undo it? The answer is that the Biblical blessing cannot be reduced to just a legal action or just a magical 'word of power'. It is a complex composite of legal action, deep psychological shaping, and prophetic insight into the future . . . The New Testament calls us to 'bless' others (Romans 12:14). This is not using the term in the sentimental way it is often used today. 'To be a blessing' usually means that our actions bring someone comfort and joy. '*

*To bless' verbally . . . means to offer deep insight into what a person needs to be and can be, and then to offer powerful words and gestures affirming and encouraging them to become that.*

**Tim Keller**

**Cross-References** (The idea of blessing appears 80 times in Genesis)

*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."*

**Genesis 1:26-28**

*Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.*

**Genesis 2:3**

*Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.*

**Genesis 9:1**

*The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him.*

**Genesis 12:1-4**

*Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob.*

**Genesis 25:21-26**

(Note which son was to receive the blessing according to God's prophetic word to Rebekah)

What unique insights do the culture, commentary, context, and cross-references give to your understanding of Genesis 27? Does it answer any of your three questions?

## DAY THREE—PUT YOURSELF IN THE STORY

### **Begin with Prayer**

*Heavenly Father, Author of life, convict and comfort me today. Help me see you and hear you as I put myself in this event. I want to draw near to you, always moving closer to the reality of your presence. I need you. I love you. Amen.*

### **Read Slowly through Genesis 27:1-28:5**

Imagine you are Isaac, Jacob or Esau. What are you feeling? What are you hearing? How do you respond? How do you wish you had responded? Where is God? What is God saying? What is God hearing you say?

Record your reflections and prayers (this can include surprises and distraction, words and images).



## DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: SEEING JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Read back through Jacob's life in Genesis 25:19-26:5 and 27:1-28:9. Record how you see the grace of God on display. Remember, grace is *unmerited favor*, it is never earned or deserved.

*Jesus was constantly offending (scandalizing) people because he ate and associated with the 'wrong' people, the people who led un-respectable lives (Luke 15:1-2; Matthew 11:2-6).*

*Paul said the cross itself was a 'skandalon' (stumbling block) to many because (a) it was a method of salvation through weakness and humiliation, not strength and triumph, and (b) it identified Jesus with the criminals and off-scourings of society (1 Corinthians 1:23) . . . Unlike Abraham, who regularly rises to model exemplary unselfishness (ch. 13), courage (ch. 14), concern for others (ch. 18), and amazing faithfulness (ch. 22), Jacob provides almost no examples . . . Almost nothing he does can be cited as an inspiring example. He is continually spinning out (and caught in) webs of deceit, cunning, favoritism and trickery. This is therefore the primary Old Testament example of the scandalousness of God's grace. God chooses, loves, and stays with a disdainful character, unworthy and unvalued. This makes no sense. Truly, God seems to have chosen Jacob simply because he is so weak, foolish and despised (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).*

**Tim Keller**

(connecting the scandalous grace given to Jacob to the grace extended by Jesus)

How has God been scandalously gracious to you recently?

Who can you *bless* today with words of affirmation? What will you say? How will you say it?

## DAY FIVE—WORSHIP

Look over the past four days of reflection and write three words that describe God. After writing the words, turn them into a prayer of praise to God.

God is . . .

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Meditation

Sit with this passage for at least five minutes—then record anything significant you hear, experience and are convinced to believe.

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."*

### **1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO BLESSES

GENESIS 25:19 - 28:9

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**Notes Page:** Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Hope in the God Who Blesses*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO BLESSES

GENESIS 25:19 - 28:9

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Notes Continued.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use this space to record the questions for discussion given at the end of the message.

# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO WOUNDS

## GENESIS 31 - 32

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### DAY ONE—BIBLE OBSERVATIONS

Read Genesis 31-32 and make observations by filling in this chart. Note that scholars believe the one Jacob wrestles with is God (see verse 30). What do you learn about . . .

Jacob	God

Read Genesis 35:9-15. How does God now re-iterate to Jacob the promise he gave to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) ?

Write a prayer of worship to God.

## DAY TWO—GOING DEEPER

Today we consider questions, culture, commentary, and context to best understand this passage.

**Questions:** Read Genesis 32:22-32 and record three questions you have about this event.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **Context**

Look back over Jacob's life from last week as well as Genesis 28:10-32:21. How do you think Jacob's family dynamic shaped his sense of identity and worth?

God told Rebekah that her younger twin, Jacob, was the heir to the promise given to Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 25:21-26) but we don't see Jacob having a personal encounter with God until Genesis 28:10-22. What did Jacob come to know of God in this encounter?

Why did Jacob fear Esau?

Before the encounter with God in Genesis 32:22-32, Jacob had spent his life wrestling with people and circumstances. List all that Jacob wrestled against before he ultimately wrestled with God.

What evidence do you see of Jacob changing in Genesis 32:1-21? Note his prayer in verses 9-12.

### **Culture and Commentary**

**Name Changing:** Throughout Genesis we see names changed. Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah. In Genesis 32, God changes Jacob's name to Israel. The IVP Bible Background Commentary says, *"The change marks the Jacob/Israel shift from outcast and usurper to the heir of the covenant and the chosen leader of God's people. Name changing was also a way to exercise authority over an individual. When a suzerain (leader of a sovereign state) put a vassal (representative) on the throne, he sometimes gave him a new name, demonstrating his power over the vassal."*

**God's Name:** God reveals his name to Moses, saying "I am that I am" but when Jacob asks God his name (Genesis 32:29), God seems to ignore the question. *"God's name is, of course, multi-dimensional, as is God himself,"* says Keller. *"But it is a bit surprising that God will not answer Jacob at all . . . Maybe the main thing to learn is (again) that this God is not a 'tame' God who is under our control. He has his curriculum laid out for every one of us. He knows what we need when we need it. We may see Moses and Samson's parents getting something from God and we assume we get it too. But every person is unique and God's training curriculum for every person is tailored to our particular needs."*

**Who Wins the Wrestling Match?** Keller says that both God and Jacob win. First, the evidence that God won: *" . . . The wrestler is God, and he promised to bless and make Jacob great and to be with him (28:13-15; 31:3). So isn't this what God wanted? Didn't he want Jacob to hold onto him in faith and seek the blessing from him? (Also) there is no place that says God lost. Though God declares that Jacob has 'overcome' or 'prevailed' (victorious), there is not places that says directly that God was defeated. God got all he (obviously) wanted to happen. So God won."*

Now the evidence that Jacob won: *" . . . 'the man saw that he could not overpower (Jacob)' (v. 25) . . . suggests that God voluntarily limited himself and wrestled with Jacob as an equal. (Also), the divine wrestler directly says that Jacob won (v. 28). Why? Jacob finally got the blessing (v. 28) he had longed for from the beginning (27:19). Jacob was victorious because once he began to realize the divinity of this mysterious wrestler, he does not flee. Rather he held on despite his pain and weakness (v. 26) and sought blessing from God. In this he triumphs. So Jacob won."*

What will you worship about God today?

## DAY THREE—PUT YOURSELF IN THE STORY

### **Begin with Prayer**

*God, help me to hold onto you. I want to hear your voice today. I want to experience your presence. Thank you for always holding onto me. I need you. I love you. Amen.*

### **Read Slowly through Genesis 32:22-31**

Imagine you are Jacob. What are you feeling? What are you hearing God say? What are you seeing? How are you changed?

Record your reflections and prayers (this can include surprises and distraction, words and images).



## DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: SEEING JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

God, who wrestles with Jacob is like no other God! He is the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is God who comes in power, weakness and vulnerability.

*What kind of God is it who will be pressed to a draw by this man (Jacob)? . . . Certainly no ordinary God! There is something new underway here about the weakness of God . . . This theology of weakness in power and power in weakness turns this text toward the New Testament and the gospel of the cross. This same dialectic stands behind Jesus' encounter with his disciples (when they ask to sit at his right and left hand in glory). They want thrones (an equivalent to Jacob asking for the name of the wrestler). Jesus counters by asking them about cups, baptisms and crosses. Like Jacob, they are invited to be persons of faith who prevail, but do so with a limp . . . Jacob's struggle may hint at an anticipation of the Crucified One (Jesus).*

**Walter Brueggemann**

*Why can Jacob come so close to God and still have his life spared (v. 30)? It is because Jesus came in weakness and died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. In this, Jesus' weakness became our strength, his defeat, our victory. Jesus was thus the ultimate Jacob, who was overpowered by the justice of God. He took the devastating blow of justice we deserved so that we, like Jacob, could only receive the bearable wounds of love and grace to wake us up!*

**Tim Keller**

Read the following passages and, in the right margin, record the power and weakness of Jesus and what it means for you.

*(God) became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son (Jesus), who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

**John 1:14-18**

*Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.*

**1 Corinthians 1:22-25**

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

**Philippians 2:5-11**

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

**2 Corinthians 8:9**

Write a prayer of thanksgiving to Jesus.

## DAY FIVE—WORSHIP

Look over the past four days of reflection and write three words that describe God. After writing the words, turn them into a prayer of praise to God.

God is . . .

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Meditation

Sit with this passage for at least five minutes—then record anything significant you hear, experience and are convinced to believe.

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace and called together the whole company of soldiers.

They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him.

And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him . . .

. They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him. At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."

Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

"Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

**Mark 15:16-20, 27-39**



# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO WOUNDS

GENESIS 31 - 32

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**Notes Page:** Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Hope in the God Who Wounds*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# HOPE IN THE GOD WHO WOUNDS

GENESIS 31 - 32

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Notes Continued.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use this space to record the questions for discussion given at the end of the message.

# HOPE IN THE UNSEEN GOD

## GENESIS 37 - 46

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### DAY ONE—BIBLE OBSERVATIONS

Read Genesis 37-46 and make observations by filling in this chart. What do you learn about . . .

Joseph	God

Write a prayer of worship to God.

## DAY TWO—GOING DEEPER

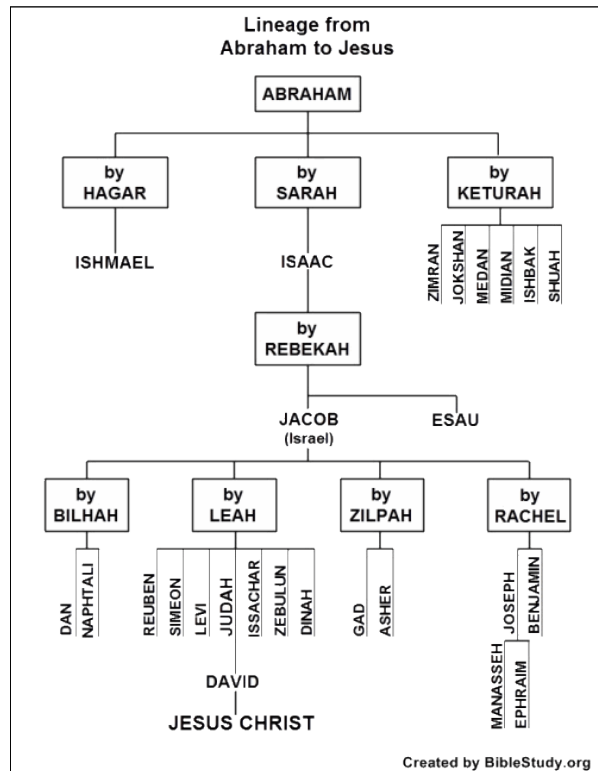
Today we consider questions, culture, commentary, context and cross-references to best understand the life of Joseph.

**Questions:** Read Genesis 37 and record three questions you have about this event.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Context

Look back over Joseph's life. What does Joseph suffer to preserve the line of Jacob through Judah to the Messiah, Jesus?



How do you see Joseph change from Genesis 37:1-11 to Genesis 46?



## Commentary

*This chapter (Genesis 37) marks the beginning of a new narrative which continues to the end of Genesis.*

*It sets the main themes and issues which will dominate the entire Joseph narrative . . .*

*Verses 1-4 introduce the entire Joseph story and set the family tensions which trigger the action.*

*Verses 5-36 announce the main theme, the power of the dream and its conflict with the brothers.*

*Already in this brief unit the theme of the narrative is clear. The battle is between the dream and the 'Killers of the Dream.' The dream seems nullified by the end of the chapter. The father believes the dreamer is dead (v. 36). The brothers believe the threat of the dream has been removed (v. 28). Only verse 36 hints at another possibility. The main character of the drama is Yahweh (God).*

*Though hidden in the form of a dream, silent and not at all visible, the listener will understand the dream is the unsettling work of Yahweh upon which everything else depends . . .*

*And in the end, the dream prevails over the tensions of the family.*

### Walter Brueggemann

*God uses Joseph to fulfill his promise to multiply Abraham's seed. Once Joseph settles his family in Goshen, the family of Abraham is "fruitful and multiplies] exceedingly" (Gen. 47:27).*

*The words "fruitful and multiply" occur throughout Genesis, but this instance is unique. Previously, God has either commanded people to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28; 9:1, 7; 35:11) or promised they will be so (Gen. 16:10; 17:2, 6; 22:17; 26:4, 24). But now, for the first time, fruitfulness and multiplication is a reality—an indicative. Under Joseph's leadership, Abraham's seed flourishes . . . Perhaps Moses (the author of Genesis) spends so much time on Joseph to show us God can pull off the impossible even through a seemingly insignificant Jew rejected by his own brothers. Perhaps Moses spends so much time on Joseph so his people would anticipate a coming Joseph who would finally and completely reverse the curse and fulfill the promises. Joseph's story is the story of the whole Bible. It's the story of glory through suffering, exaltation through humiliation. It's the story of the cross and the crown.*

**Samuel Emadi** (on fulfilling the promise to Abraham)

## Cross-References

Before Stephen was martyred in the early church, he preached a sermon outlining God's plan from Abraham to Jesus.

*"Then God gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs. Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace. Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our ancestors could not find food. When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our forefathers on their first visit. On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all . . ."*

### Acts 7:8-14

What will you worship about God today?

## DAY THREE—PUT YOURSELF IN THE STORY

### **Begin with Prayer**

*God, my good, good Father, show me your presence. Show me how you have worked in my life and how you are currently working in my life. Show me your care for my future. I want to see you. I love you. I need you. I surrender my life to you. Amen.*

### **Read Slowly through Genesis 39**

Imagine you are Joseph. What are you feeling? Where is God? What are you seeing? How are you changed?

Record your reflections and prayers (this can include surprises and distraction, words and images).

**DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: SEEING JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

*Joseph was a type of Christ in that he suffered unjustly and then was exalted to save his brethren. Undergoing a series of deaths and resurrections, Joseph typified the “sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow” (1 Peter 1:10-11). He was envied and hated by his brothers, suffered at their hands and was exalted to a place of power over the most powerful nation of the world. Jesus, the greater Joseph, was envied and hated by His countrymen and brethren, murdered by them and then exalted to the highest place of power and honor to save the world by feeding them with the rich granaries of heaven.*

**Nicholas Batzig**

*Jesus is the true and better Joseph who, at the right hand of the king, forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.*

**Tim Keller**

*Joseph was God’s righteous servant, suffering because of his faithfulness to God. Yet the path of suffering led to a throne and to the fulfillment of the word of God, given by the revelation of his dreams. God had made the life of Joseph a sign of the way in which his blessing (Jesus) would come. By the word of God and the servant of God, the mercy of God would be made known to the nations.*

**Edmund P. Clowney**

<b>Joseph - A Type of Christ</b>		
<b>Barnes' Bible Charts</b>		
<b>JOSEPH</b>	<b>CHARACTERISTIC OR ATTRIBUTE</b>	<b>CHRIST</b>
Genesis 37:4	Both were despised	John 1:11
Genesis 37:36	Both went into Egypt	Matthew 2:13-15
Joshua 24:32	Both returned from Egypt	Matthew 2:19-23
Genesis 39:20	Both were arrested	John 18:12
Genesis 39:14-19	Both were falsely accused	Mark 14:57-58
Genesis 39:7-12	Both resisted temptation & sin	Matthew 4:1-11
Genesis 39:31-35	Both were separated from their fathers	John 20:21
Genesis 41:40	Both had great power & authority	Matthew 28:18
Genesis 37:28	Both were sold	Matthew 26:15
Genesis 42:24	Both showed great love	John 15:13
Genesis 45:5-7	Both helped preserve life	Matthew 1:21
Genesis 45:3	Both were found alive	Luke 24:46
Genesis 45:1-15	Both were reunited with brethren	John 19:19-29
Genesis 45:6-7	Both showed compassion	2 Corinthians 8:9
Genesis 45:15	Both showed pardon	Luke 3:34
Genesis 39:21	God was with both	Matthew 17:5

Consider Jesus, our suffering servant, bringing about our salvation and being in very nature God.

*. . . just as the Son of Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve,  
and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

**Matthew 20:28**

*But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.*

*To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example,  
that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."*

*When they hurled their insults at Jesus, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no  
threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. "He himself bore our sins" in his body  
on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness;*

*"by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray,"  
but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

**1 Peter 2:20-25**

*For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought  
to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority . . . When you were dead in your sins  
and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ.*

*He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness,  
which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.  
And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them,  
triumphing over them by the cross.*

**Colossians 2:9-10, 13-15**

Write a prayer of adoration and thanksgiving to Jesus.

## DAY FIVE—WORSHIP

Look over the past four days of reflection and write three words that describe God. After writing the words, turn them into a prayer of praise to God.

God is . . .

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Meditation

Sit with this passage for at least five minutes—then record anything significant you hear, experience and are convinced to believe.

*Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, the Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the Lord was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.*

**Genesis 39:20-23**



# HOPE IN THE UNSEEN GOD

GENESIS 37 - 46

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Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Hope in the Unseen God*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](http://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

# HOPE IN THE UNSEEN GOD

GENESIS 37 - 46

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Notes Continued.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use this space to record the questions for discussion given at the end of the message.



# HOPE IN THE GOD OF GRACE

## GENESIS 47 - 50

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### DAY ONE—BIBLE OBSERVATIONS

Read Genesis 47-50 and make observations by filling in this chart. What do you learn about . . .

Joseph	Jacob (also called Israel)	God

Write a prayer of worship to God.

## DAY TWO—GOING DEEPER

Today we consider questions, context, culture, commentary, and cross-references to best understand God's grace in Genesis 47-50.

**Questions:** Look back over Genesis 47-50 and record three questions.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### Context

Look back over Jacob's life (Genesis 25:27-34; 27:1-35:15). How does Jacob's history make his actions and words in Genesis 48 more stunning?

### Culture and Commentary

*(When Jacob switches his hands when blessing Joseph's children), Joseph gets agitated because he is a man of his time, and he knows the world decreed that things got done through certain people.*

*They got done through boys, not girls. They got done through older boys, not younger boys. They got done through wealthy families, not poor families . . . (But), when God works in the world, he repeatedly chooses the one the world says is not 'the one'. In Genesis, he chooses the younger son over the older son every time, utterly confounding the culture of the day . . . He chooses Isaac, not Ishmael. He chooses smarmy Jacob, not manly, dynamic, charismatic Esau. The salvation of the world come not through fertile, beautiful Hagar but barren, old Sarah; not through beautiful Rachel but unattractive Leah.*

*This theme pervades Scripture. In the book of Judges, every single judge is the wrong kind of person. Every one is a mess or from the wrong side of the tracks. Years later, when Israel comes face to face with Goliath, God's deliverer is the only one of Jesse's sons who has not gone through puberty.*

*When you go to the Gospels (the first four books of the New Testament), every time there's a prostitute and a religious leader, a tax collector and a teacher of the law, a racial outsider and a racial insider, a morally degraded outsider and an upstanding moral, Bible-teaching leader—every time there's a racial, gender, moral, or political outsider versus an insider, Jesus works with the outsider . . . God works through the people the world thinks are failures. God's grace flows through them. Why? Because the ultimate example of God's work in the world was the only founder of a major religion who died in disgrace, abandoned by everyone he loved, including his Father, and beaten into the dust.*

*Salvation through Jesus Christ came through defeat, poverty and rejection.*

**Tim Keller**

Some commentators suggest that Genesis 50:20-21 summarizes the major theme of Genesis. Do you agree? Disagree? Why?

### **Commentary**

*Perhaps the best parallel to Genesis 50:20 is the case of Judas Iscariot (the betrayer of Jesus in the New Testament). He is both evil and important (much as there are others who are good and important).*

*In lifting up his heel against his friend (Jesus), Judas is marked as the archetypal traitor.*

*He is additionally a figure of sinister importance in the working out of the divine will.*

*Judas is to Jesus what Joseph's brothers were to Joseph.*

**New International Commentary on the Old Testament**

### **Cross-References**

*Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers,*

*"Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance." So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.*

**Genesis 45:3-8**

*"Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.*

*This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.*

*But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

**Acts 2:22-24**

*In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

**Romans 8:26-28**

What will you worship about God today?

## DAY THREE—PUT YOURSELF IN THE STORY

### **Begin with Prayer**

*God, show me the circumstances in my life that I consider evil or painful and how you are working in them for my good, the good of others and your glory. Help me to rest in your sovereignty over all things. Grow in me patience and joy. I love you. Amen.*

### **Read Slowly through Genesis 50:15-26**

Imagine you are Joseph's brothers. What are you feeling? What do you hear Joseph say to you? How are you changed?

Record your reflections and prayers (this can include surprises and distraction, words and images).

## DAY FOUR—GOSPEL: SEEING JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

*(Joseph said to his brothers:) "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.*

**Genesis 50:20-21 (NIV)**

Re-write these words from Genesis 50:20-21, making them personal to your journey today.

*While the (healed) man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them:*

*"Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.*

*We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.*

*Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.' "Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.' When God raised up his servant (Jesus), he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."*

**Acts 3:11-24**

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. . . .*

**John 3:16-17**

Write a prayer of thanksgiving to God.

## DAY FIVE—WORSHIP

Look over the past four days of reflection and write three words that describe God. After writing the words, turn them into a prayer of praise to God.

**God is . . .**

1.

2.

3.

### **Meditation**

Sit with this passage for at least five minutes—then record anything significant you hear, experience and are convinced to believe.

*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory . . .*

*(We) groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.*

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Romans 8:14-17, 23-35, 37-39**

# HOPE IN THE GOD OF GRACE

## GENESIS 47 - 50

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**Notes Page:** Use this page to take notes on the talk, *Hope in the God of Grace*. Find this talk at [womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources](https://womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources).

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# HOPE IN THE GOD OF GRACE

GENESIS 47 - 50

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Notes Continued.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use this space to record the questions for discussion given at the end of the message.