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*Seeing Jesus*  
IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

.....  
A 10-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

# The Promised One

*Seeing Jesus in Genesis*

LEADER'S GUIDE

nancy guthrie

# The Promised One

*Seeing Jesus in Genesis*

## Leader's Guide

(for use with the book only or the  
book combined with video study)

nancy guthrie

*The Promised One: Seeing Jesus in Genesis Leader's Guide*

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*Based on the book The Promised One: Seeing Jesus in Genesis (A 10-Week Bible Study)*, first printing 2011

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# Contents

Introduction	4	Week 5: The Tower of Babel	
Determining Your Schedule for Studying	5	Personal Bible Study	36
<i>The Promised One</i>		Discussion Guide	38
Ideas and Resources for Discussion Group Facilitators	7	Week 6: Abraham	
Your Goal as Discussion Leader	7	Personal Bible Study	40
Using Your Time Effectively	7	Discussion Guide	44
Dealing with Common Challenges	9	Week 7: Abraham and Isaac	
Personal Bible Study Questions with Possible Answers	11	Personal Bible Study	47
The Uniqueness of Discussion Guides for This Study	12	Discussion Guide	50
Note-Taking Pages for Duplication	14	Week 8: Jacob	
Week 1: The Road to Emmaus		Personal Bible Study	52
Discussion Guide	15	Discussion Guide	55
Week 2: Creation		Week 9: Joseph	
Personal Bible Study	17	Personal Bible Study	57
Discussion Guide	21	Discussion Guide	60
Week 3: The Fall		Week 10: The Sons of Jacob	
Personal Bible Study	23	Personal Bible Study	62
Discussion Guide	27	Discussion Guide	64
Week 4: Noah and the Flood		Note-Taking Pages for Duplication	66
Personal Bible Study	29		
Discussion Guide	33		

## Introduction to *The Promised One* for Leaders

*The Promised One: Seeing Jesus in Genesis* is an in-depth study of the first book of the Bible, with the goal of understanding it in the way that Jesus himself taught the disciples to read and understand the Old Testament: as being all about him. As we see Christ in the people and patterns and in the shadows and stories of Genesis, it will help us to understand the person and work of Christ more clearly and cause us to worship him more fully.

This guide has been prepared to equip you to plan and lead a study of *The Promised One* using either the book alone or the book along with the video series. Teaching experience or gifting is not required to lead this study—just a willingness to organize, oversee, and facilitate a meaningful discussion time as well as personal enthusiasm for knowing Christ more deeply through the study of his Word.

**If you're using just the book**, everything needed by participants and leaders is provided there. Each week's lesson includes:

- ≈ Personal Bible Study
- ≈ Teaching Chapter (with "How Genesis Points to What Is Yet to Come" at the end of each chapter)
- ≈ Discussion Guide

For a 10-week study, participants will want to have the book in hand prior to the first week the group meets. And while there is no Personal Bible Study to be completed the first week, you should instruct participants to read the first Teaching Chapter, "The Beginning in Light of the Ending," before they come (unless your group's style will be to read the chapter aloud as a group, which some groups elect to do). For each of the

following nine weeks of the study, participants will be expected to complete the Personal Bible Study section of the study and to read the Teaching Chapter before they come. You may want to encourage members to freely mark sections in the Teaching Chapter that are significant or meaningful to them or sections that leave them with questions, and include a time in your group discussion to go over these sections. The group will use the Discussion Guide in your time together to provide some structure to the discussion, with participants bringing material from the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter into the discussion as desired.

**If you're using the book in combination with the video series**, group members will be asked to complete the Personal Bible Study section of each week's lesson before they come. Each participant will also need a copy of the book. Since there is no Personal Bible Study in the first week's lesson, there is no advance preparation for that first week.

On the videos, Nancy presents virtually the same content as the Teaching Chapters minus the "How Genesis Points to What Is Yet to Come" section at the end of each chapter. So if you are using the video series, those participating in the study have these options:

1. Read the chapter in advance as a preview of what will be presented on the video.
2. Just listen to Nancy teach the content of the chapter on the video and read only the "How Genesis Points to What Is Yet to Come" as part of the group discussion time or on their own.
3. Go back and read the chapter after watching the video, if needed, to seal or clarify what was presented in the video.

It is a good idea to encourage participants to take notes during the video even though the content of the video is in the book. For each video presentation, reproducible note-taking pages, which you may copy for your group members, are included at the end of this Leader's Guide. Something transpires when we process words and ideas through a pen or pencil onto paper that aids us in processing and retaining the words and ideas. But those taking notes may also rest easy if they miss something significant, because the complete content is also in the book.

After a brief introduction and prayer, the group will want to watch the video, which will last about 45 minutes, and then give at least 45 minutes to working through the Discussion Guide and perhaps reading the "How Genesis Points to What Is Yet to Come" section of the Teaching Chapter together.

If group members miss a particular week, you may want to encourage them to go to the website, [www.seeingJesusintheOldTestament.com](http://www.seeingJesusintheOldTestament.com), where they can download the video they missed, or they can simply read the chapter in the book.

### Determining Your Schedule for Studying *The Promised One*

This study has been put together in a way that offers flexibility in how you use it and flexibility in how you schedule your time for working through it.

**A 10-Week Study**—As described above, participants would need to have books in advance of the first week you meet, with instructions to read the chapter in Week 1, "The Beginning in Light of the Ending," before they arrive the first week. There is no Personal Bible Study portion of the lesson for Week 1. When you get together that first week, you can spend some time getting to know each other, communicating the format you will use, and discussing the chapter you've all read, using the Discussion Guide for Week 1.

From then on, each week, participants will be asked to come to the group time having completed the Personal Bible Study section and having read the Teaching Chapter of the that week's lesson. You may want to suggest to participants that they put a star beside questions in the Personal Bible Study that they want to be sure to bring up in the discussion, and underline key passages in the chapter that are meaningful or that raise questions for them that they'd like to discuss. During your time together each week you will discuss the big ideas of the lesson using the Discussion Guide, bringing in content from the Personal Bible Study and the chapter as you see fit, depending on your allotted time.

**An 11- or 12-Week Study**—You may prefer to meet the first week and distribute the books at that point, using that first week solely to get to know each other and get organized. Assign the group to read the chapter in Week 1 for discussion the following week. If you want to extend the study to twelve weeks, you might set a week following the last lesson to come back together, asking each member to plan to share what truths and take-aways from the study have been most meaningful or perhaps to talk through any lingering questions from the study.

**A 20-Week Study**—There is a great deal of material here, and you may want to take your time with it, giving more time to discuss its foundational truths and allowing it to sink in. Expanding the study may also be beneficial when you have only one hour or less to meet together each week and also want to incorporate worship, prayer, or personal sharing into your small-group time.

To expand the study over twenty weeks, you would break each week into two parts. You would spend one week on the Personal Bible Study section—either doing it on your own and discussing your answers when you meet, or actually working through the questions together when you meet (which would lessen the amount of

time required outside of the group time and perhaps diminish barriers to participation for those who struggle with working through the questions on their own). Then you would ask group members to read the Teaching Chapter on their own before the next meeting, and you'd use the Discussion Guide to discuss the big ideas of the lesson the following week.

If you meet once for Week 1 (since there is no Personal Bible Study section for the first week), and meet for a final week to share any big-picture truths to take away from the study, it will add up to twenty weeks.

## Ideas and Resources for Discussion Group Facilitators

Thank you for your willingness to lead a group through this study of Genesis. I always find that when I lead, I learn far more than I do when I'm just a member of the group, because I know I must invest more effort to truly "own" the material. I hope that this extra investment in this study of Genesis will be a blessing to you as you seek to effectively lead your group.

### **Your Goal as Discussion Leader**

What is your goal or role as a discussion leader? I suggest you make it your goal to guide your group through a time of open and authentic discussion of the biblical truths presented in the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter or video, seeking to clarify challenging concepts, solidify the group's grasp of the truths presented, and apply those truths to real life.

Sometimes we have anxiety about leading or are reluctant to lead because we know we don't have all the answers, and we're afraid someone will come up with a question we can't answer or will take the discussion in a direction we can't handle. Don't allow yourself to be intimidated by the false expectation that if you step up to facilitate the discussion, you must have all the "right" answers. Too many times in our discussions of the Bible, someone in the group (and oftentimes it is the leader) feels he or she must sum up every part of the discussion with the "right" answer. So, as you lead your group, I encourage you to avoid the compulsion to come quickly to the "right" answer to every question. Don't be afraid to let some questions hang for a while or to allow members to struggle with the issues involved in the series of questions.

Keep asking for the input of other participants. Also, there's nothing wrong with admitting, as the leader, that you don't know something or don't fully understand something and you need to do some more study on it or want to invite someone on the pastoral staff to help answer the question. Determine to lead your group as a fellow-learner and not as an expert who knows all. Expect God to use his Word not only in the lives of your group members but in your life as well!

While you do not want to dominate the group, you do want to lead effectively and efficiently. I assure you that you will have group members who will want you to lead with strength to create an environment that fosters meaningful discussion. As the leader, you set the tone for authenticity and openness. You set an example of giving short answers so that others can talk and of being a good listener. Being an effective leader also means that it is up to you to bring reluctant talkers into the conversation and to redirect the conversation when it has gone offtrack. Few people want to be part of a group that is inflexible, restrictive, or rules-oriented, but they do want to be part of a group that is organized and purposeful, in which expectations are unapologetically communicated and guidelines are respected.

### **Using Your Time Effectively**

As the leader, you have the responsibility for directing how to use the time for group discussion. While some participants may be very casual about how the time is used, others in your group become frustrated when they feel their



valuable time is being wasted. There are several issues, I've found, that have a significant impact on using the time allotted for small-group discussion effectively:

### *Getting Started*

So often we run out of time because we are slow to get started. We are waiting for latecomers, or chatting, or enjoying some food together and simply let valuable discussion time get away from us. All groups develop a culture, and members learn whether the group will really start on time or not, and they adjust their sense of urgency with regard to arrival time accordingly. Certainly you need to allow some time for participants to greet each other and to share their lives, but you will want to determine how long that will last and give the group a firm start time for the discussion. If you set a culture of starting on time regardless of whether everyone in the group has arrived, and not allowing latecomers to interrupt your discussion when they arrive, you may likely find that group members become more punctual. At the beginning of the study, you may also want to ask that any members who arrive late simply join the group and enter into the already-commenced discussion as unobtrusively as possible. When we stop the discussion while everyone greets the late arriver, perhaps hearing the story of what caused the lateness, it can be challenging to get started again. You as the leader will need to manage this area with a blend of appropriate firmness and grace.

### *Prayer Requests*

Many times, we want our small-group discussion times to include sharing prayer requests, which is a meaningful way of sharing our lives together and exercising our trust in and relationship with God. But we also know that sometimes sharing requests can turn into telling long stories and lengthy discussions as other members offer advice or input. One way to han-

dle this, if the use of time for prayer requests is a concern for your group, is to provide notecards for people to write down their requests and share them at the end or simply have members swap cards with someone else. Or you may simply want to determine a time to bring your discussion to a close that will allow for sharing requests at the end, praying together over those requests, and praying through the truths presented in the lesson.

### *Getting Stuck Along the Way*

So often we give too much time to earlier questions and simply don't have time to work our way through all that we want to cover. I strongly suggest you look over the Discussion Guide before your group time to determine how you will use the time. Mark the key questions you must get to. Make a note beside each question you want to be sure to include, indicating an estimate of how much time you want to give for discussing that question, and then watch your watch along the way to keep on track.

### *Keeping the Focus on God's Word*

People come to a Bible study for many reasons, and from many situations and struggles, and with varying levels of knowledge of and interest in the Bible. Sometimes our groups can easily slip from being a Bible study into more of a personal support group. Finding that right balance between biblical study and personal support is a significant challenge for every small-group leader. I've sometimes heard group leaders say that when a group member arrives with a significant struggle or sorrow, the leader feels she must set the study aside to listen and give input to that hurting person. Perhaps there are situations where this is the best thing to do, but we must also remember that the Word of God speaks into every need and situation in our lives. It heals, it gives perspective, and it instructs, convicts, restores, and renews. Be sure that you do not assume that the advice and input of group

members has more power than your discussion of the truths of God's Word to help that hurting person.

Keep in mind that while some participants may come more for the fellowship and sharing of their lives with each other, many other participants are hungry to feast on biblical teaching and discussion of God's Word. If, over time, these participants find that the Word is often set aside or given short shrift, they may look for another forum in which to study God's Word with others.

#### *Ending On Time*

Because participants have plans after the study, people to meet, children to pick up from child-care, etc., it is important that you end on time so that participants will not be slipping out one-by-one or be unable to focus on the discussion because of the distraction of needing to be somewhere else.

### **Dealing with Common Challenges**

#### *Sharing of Opinion without*

#### *Regard to God's Word*

It is only natural that group members will often begin their input in the discussion with the words, "Well, I think . . ." And, in fact, you will notice that many questions are phrased in a "what do you think" manner. This is purposeful not only to get people thinking, but to emphasize that there isn't necessarily a right or wrong answer and that an idea is worth considering or imagining. But we also want to cultivate a sense of the authority of Scripture in our discussions. Though it is not a welcome perspective in our culture, every opinion does not have equal value or weight with every other opinion. The revealed truth of God's Word is what must carry the greatest weight in our discussions. While you don't want to embarrass someone in the group setting who states something that is clearly unscriptural, it may be a good idea to gently challenge a questionable opinion with something like,

"That's interesting. I wonder how you would support that from Scripture?" Or you might want to find a time outside the group setting to discuss the issue, using biblical support to gently challenge error.

#### *The Discussion Gets Lively but Offtrack*

Sometimes one person answers, and then another person answers, and the discussion can quickly get away from the original question and onto an interesting but perhaps not directly related issue. When this happens, it may be wise to state the obvious and then turn the focus back to the content at hand by saying something like, "We could certainly talk a long time about X, but we have so much important material to discuss in our lesson this week, so let's get back to that." If you haven't gotten to some of the key truth involved in the question, go back and state the original question again, asking perhaps, "Did anyone see it differently or have another idea?"

#### *Group Members Are Quiet*

#### *and Slow to Respond*

It is important as a leader to become comfortable with silence, especially at first. Sometimes people are just slow to get going in the discussion and don't want to appear to be a know-it-all or a dominator of the discussion time. Some people fear having the "wrong" answer or revealing their biblical illiteracy, especially if they are surrounded by people they perceive to have more biblical knowledge than they do. One way to deal with an awkward silence is to make a joke about the silence without coming across as chiding your group. Humor is always a great way to diffuse discomfort. I have a friend who sometimes says, "I can wait you out!"

Don't be afraid to call on people to answer questions. You probably don't want to do that with every question, but some people simply don't like to answer a question unless they're invited to do so. Often these people have very thoughtful answers that will benefit the group.

You might want to turn to the reluctant participant and say, “What do you think about that, Joan?” or, “Is that how you see it, Katie?”

You will also want to develop the habit of affirming the answers and willingness of those who share in your group. Set the example of being a responsive and attentive listener and commenting on their input as insightful, something you’ve never thought of before, or as personally helpful to you. Resist the temptation to sum up or add to every answer given, though it may be helpful to restate some answers if you can help to clarify something that someone may be struggling to articulate. You can also help to generate genuine give-and-take by asking a follow-up to someone’s statement or by asking that person to tell you more about what she has said. Make sure you are focusing on the person who is sharing rather than on how you will ask your next question.

#### *One Person Dominates the Discussion*

If you have someone who tends to answer every question or dominates the discussion, you might begin the next question with the statement, “I’d love to hear from someone who has not shared yet today; what do you think?” Or you might direct your next question specifically to another group member.

Sometimes, when a participant is speaking too long, you do a service to the group and the discussion to discreetly interrupt, perhaps saying something like, “What you’re saying is helpful, and I’d love to hear someone else’s thoughts,” or summarize what they’ve said in a concise statement and use it as a transition to the next question. Another method is to interrupt with a question such as, “What verse or phrase helped you to see that?” Remember, the other group members want and need you to take charge in this situation to lead effectively.

You might also want to pull that person aside at some point and tell her that you really

want to create an atmosphere in the group in which everyone is sharing. Ask her if she would be willing to pick two or three of the questions that she really wants to share while refraining from answering questions less important to her, so that others in the group might become more willing to take part in the discussion.

#### *Participants Habitually Do Not Complete the Personal Bible Study*

Everyone has weeks when the schedule or a sick kid makes it difficult to complete the lesson. But when group members are habitually not completing the Personal Bible Study, it is a problem. If you are using the video study, the content of the lectures assumes participants have a great deal of familiarity with the passages, as there is not enough time to read all of the applicable Scripture; therefore, the participant will not be prepared for what is being presented without having completed the Personal Bible Study. If you are using only the book for your study, there will be little foundation for group discussion if the Personal Bible Study and Teaching Chapter have not been read prior to the group time.

Be sure to emphasize the importance of completing the assignments. Do this at the beginning of your time together on the first week and again the second week you meet. Without being rigid or lacking in grace, you want to call participants to follow through on their commitment to the study rather than give them an easy out every time. As humans we all need accountability, and sometimes in Bible study groups we are so afraid of offending participants that we do not fulfill our role as leaders by encouraging faithfulness, punctuality, and full participation. If someone struggles to get the lessons done, you might:

- Suggest that rather than hoping to find some time during the week, she should make an appointment for a specific time on her calendar to complete the lesson during the week and then commit to keeping the appointment, as

she would for a lunch date with a friend or for a doctor's appointment.

- ≈ Explore the possibility of her setting a time during the week to get together personally or by phone with another group member to work through the questions.
- ≈ If she continues to be unable to complete the work, don't worry about it if it does not adversely affect the rest of the group or the group discussion time. We cannot always fully grasp what another person's life is like, and if the best she can do is get there, you may decide that is enough. If it does adversely affect the group's morale, attitude, or discussion time, you might ask her if it would be better to withdraw and participate in a study requiring this level of commitment and preparation at a later time when she can devote herself to it more fully.

#### *Disagreement with What Is Being Taught*

Sometimes seeing things a little differently can be very productive in a group discussion. We learn from each other as we discover and discuss the differences or nuances in how we see things. There are many matters in this study that allow for a breadth of perspectives, and there are some matters that challenge what may be dearly held perspectives. What is *not* welcome in the group is a repeatedly argumentative spirit or combative approach to what is being presented. If areas of disagreement come up that cannot be productively resolved in the group, you may want to say something like, "I appreciate your perspective on that. We need to move on in our discussion, but let's get together, just the two of us, or with Pastor —, and talk this through some more. I'm sure we both can learn more about this."

Because we are humans dealing with other humans, we will likely have areas of disagreement, different experiences, and different preferences. But that never means that we cannot have unity as we seek to submit ourselves to God's Word. This and every other aspect is a matter of prayer as you prepare to lead your group. The best news about leading a group is that God always equips us to do what he calls us to do. Ask God to give you the wisdom to work through

whatever may come up in your small group. Ask him for insight into the personalities of the people in your group and the backgrounds that have made them who they are and shaped their perspectives about the Scriptures. Ask God to fill your heart with a burden to love your group members as you lead them through this study of his Word.

#### **Personal Bible Study Questions with Possible Answers**

The question is often asked, "How long should it take to complete the Personal Bible Study questions?" The truth is, there is no set time frame. We all approach this differently. Some participants love to luxuriate, think through, look up, and write out. Others have the approach of simply looking for the answers and making short notations rather than writing long answers to questions. So how should you answer the question, "How much time should it take?" I suggest you say that it takes as much time as they choose to invest in it. Certainly some weeks they may have more time than others, but we all know that we get more out of study the more we put into it. And the depth of thinking through the lesson is not necessarily reflected in the length of answers written on the page or the time spent according to the clock.

What is most important is not how much time it takes, but planning a time to work through the Personal Bible Study and keeping that appointment. In fact, on the first week, you might ask each group member to share with the group when she intends to work on the Personal Bible Study in the coming week. You might ask those who have done similar studies if they prefer to do it in one sitting or to break it up over several days. Also suggest they consider using Sunday, a day set aside for God, to study God's Word.

You will notice that some questions are marked with a small clock symbol so that those short on time or who choose not to complete the

entire lesson can complete only those questions and still be equipped to take part in the group discussion.

Because you will want to invite participants to bring up questions from the Personal Bible Study that were meaningful or perhaps perplexing, I have included in this guide a copy of each week's Personal Bible Study that includes possible answers to the questions. This is provided for you as the leader to assist you in leading the group and dealing with difficult questions, but it should not be provided to group members.

We all know that it is a challenge to resist looking for the answers to a crossword puzzle in the back of the book while we're working on it. And likewise, as the leader, it may be a challenge for you to resist working through the questions with this resource at your fingertips. I suggest, however, that you seek to complete the Personal Study Questions along with your fellow group members without the aid of the helps. After completing the Personal Bible Study yourself, you may want to look over what follows prior to your discussion time and add notes to your own answers as desired in preparation for the group discussion.

### **The Uniqueness of the Discussion Guides for This Study**

Oftentimes in Bible studies in which we're given a series of questions to work through on our own, our discussions can consist primarily of sharing the answers we found as we studied, but this study is different. While each week you will want to ask participants if there were any questions to discuss from the Personal Bible Study section that were especially meaningful or challenging, the Discussion Guide for *The Promised One* is designed to facilitate a discussion about the broader themes from the passages being studied.

As the leader, you should make it your goal to draw out the members of your group, creating

an environment that is safe for personal struggle, difficult questions, discovery, and even ambiguity. Because the discussion questions don't always lend themselves to simple answers but provide for more interaction with the themes and challenges of the passages being studied, you may want to spend some time working your way through the questions in the Discussion Guide prior to the group time to anticipate where the discussion will be headed.

You may use the Discussion Guide as a script to lead you through the discussion time, or you may use it simply as a resource, picking and choosing the questions you think will be most effective with your group. You may also want to plan each week to invite participants to share something that was significant or meaningful to them from the Personal Bible Study, determining ahead of time at what point in the discussion you will invite those comments. On some weeks, you will find that a question is already included in the Discussion Guide connecting back to the Personal Bible Study that week.

Each week the discussion begins with a question called "Getting the Discussion Going" which is designed to make people comfortable with talking and sharing personally from their lives. If someone does not have enough confidence in their understanding of the Bible to want to talk much on the more biblical questions, this is a question you may want to use to invite that person's participation. If discussion comes to your group quite easily, or if you've just watched the video presentation of the teaching and sense the group is ready to dive directly into the heart of the lesson, you may want to skip this question.

Depending on the amount of time you have, you may want to work through each of the "Getting to the Heart of It" questions, or you may want to select only a few of these questions to save time for the final two key questions that apply the truth personally and consider the big-picture story of the Bible.

While the bulk of the discussion questions center around the biblical storyline and the theology presented in the passage at hand, each week there is also a “Getting Personal” question. This is where you will want to be especially sensitive to encourage a number of people to answer and not allow the discussion to simply go in the flow of the initial comments. Be sure to go back to the original question at some point, asking other participants to share their thoughts and experiences that may be different from those shared first.

The Discussion Guide presents a final question each week that will help participants to grow in their grasp of the larger story of the Bible and how the passage at hand fits into that larger story. If you are like me, this is the part of Bible study that has been lacking for most of my life. Often in studies we have jumped quickly to personal application in the life of faith, and we haven’t stepped back to develop our understanding of the implications of the particular passage we are studying in light of the larger story of God’s redemption of all things through Christ. But as we develop our understanding of how God has worked and is working to bring about his plans, we find that it actually helps us to understand and apply parts of Scripture that otherwise would be difficult to adopt.

If you want to develop more of your own understanding of the larger story of the Bible, you may want to supplement your study with one of the following books that I have found helpful:

*According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* by Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1991)

*Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* by Michael Lawrence (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010)

*Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* by Michael Williams (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2005)

*God’s Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* by Vaughan Roberts (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002)

*The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God’s Story* by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010)

*The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* by Christopher J. H. Wright (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006)

Another aspect of the study that may be new to you or to group members is the repeated emphasis on the consummation, which is what is yet to come when Christ returns and establishes the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21–22). There may be some unfamiliar ideas for you and your group members in the “How Genesis Points to What Is Yet to Come” section at the end of each chapter. (I say this might be new to you only because after growing up in a solid church and studying the Bible all of my life, I find grasping this biblical reality is relatively new to me as well as to many people I talk to.)

If time allows, you may want to read together the “How Genesis Points to What Is Yet to Come” section of the Teaching Chapter, near the end of your discussion time, and discuss what is new or meaningful in it. For those of us who have been more oriented toward an understanding of life here on earth with little orientation toward what the Bible teaches about the resurrection of those who have died in Christ and the restoration of all creation to its Eden-like perfection, some of what we read here may not fit with what we’ve always thought about eternity. The truth is, many groups could likely spend the entire discussion time on this section, so you will want to bring it in near the end so that you reserve plenty of time to focus on the big ideas of the passage first.

If this kind of discussion of the consummation and the new heaven and the new earth is somewhat new or confusing to you, here are some resources that you might find helpful:

*The Restoration of All Things (A Gospel Coalition Booklet)* by Sam Storms (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011)

*Heaven* by Randy Alcorn (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2004)

In each week, I've included the discussion questions. Since these questions are designed to bring out various perspectives, there are not "suggested answers" as I provided in the Personal Bible Study. However, where appropriate, I've made notes about issues that might come up in the discussion or goals for particular questions where clarity might be helpful.

### **Note-Taking Pages for Duplication**

The process of taking notes is, for many of us, less about having the notes to refer to later than about the increased concentration and comprehension that comes to us as we hear something and process it through our pen onto paper. Cer-

tainly each of your members should have a copy of the companion book, *The Promised One*, and all of the content from the videos is included in the book. Still, it may be helpful for some members to take notes with an outline to help them track along with the teaching presentation on the video. Others may choose to take notes on their own blank page, and some may choose not to take notes at all.

I've included note pages at the end of this Leader's Guide for each week, with the major headings as presented on the videos, which you may copy for your group. You are free to make as many copies of these note-taking pages as needed for your group members.

*Week 1*

# The Road to Emmaus (Luke 24)

## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. Some of us grew up going to Sunday school, getting the Old Testament in bits and pieces by learning stories, while perhaps understanding very little about how they fit into the big-picture story of the Bible. Others of us grew up without the benefit of being taught the Bible. Would each of you tell some of what you remember thinking about the Bible from your childhood?

*Of course, you will want to be very sensitive here about any participants who may not have grown up in a church and feel embarrassed by their lack of biblical knowledge around people who have known it since childhood. If that is the case in your group, you might want to talk about the disadvantages of being so over-familiar with stories from a childhood perspective that we are no longer amazed at much of the biblical story.*

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. Try to take yourself back to the days following the death and resurrection of Christ. Imagine that you were one of those disciples whom we read about walking on the road to Emmaus. What have you just seen and heard and experienced in Jerusalem? What questions are in your mind, and what concerns are in your heart?

*Was Jesus a fraud? Am I going to look like a fool? Has all of my devotion been for nothing? Will the religious leaders come for me next?*

3. Likely these disciples had grown up being taught the Torah and were well-versed in the stories of Genesis. What do you think it must have been like to realize that there was something they had missed and to have Jesus take

them through the Old Testament revealing how it pointed to him?

4. On the last pages of the chapter (24–25), there was a list of snapshots of how we are going to see Jesus in this study of Genesis. Turn there and look at that list. Which one is most intriguing to you and why?

5. Jesus said that the Pharisees studied the Scriptures intently, thinking that their knowledge of the Scriptures and tedious law keeping would put them in good stead with God. But there was Jesus standing in front of them, and they rejected him. He infuriated, offended, and threatened their power, so they had him killed. How do we keep from being like those Pharisees as we study the Scriptures?

*We can read and study the Old Testament not simply to look for laws to obey or examples to emulate, but to look for and take in how the Old Testament points to and presents Christ. We can read all of the Bible embracing the one it is all about—Jesus.*

### Getting Personal

6. In Luke 24 we read that Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (v. 45). As we begin the study of Genesis, would you share with the group why you are here? What do you hope to gain from the investment you will make in this study over the coming weeks? How do you want to be different after you complete it?

### Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

7. Throughout this study, we will be seeking to grasp how the passage we’re studying fits into



the bigger story of God's plan for redemption. And each week, the Teaching Chapter will be followed with a short piece on how the beginning of God's story in Genesis points to the end of God's story, when Christ returns. When he comes again, everything will be restored and renewed, and we will begin an eternity in his presence, ruling and reigning with him in the new heaven and the new earth. But right now we're living in an in-between time. Christ has accomplished everything necessary to usher in that day, but he said that only the Father knows when

that day will be. This will be the culmination of all that Genesis and the rest of the Bible has pointed us toward. This is where human history is headed, and yet some of us rarely think about it or long for that day when the Promised One comes a second time. As we close our first time together, let's pray that God will use this study of the beginning of his story to implant in us a greater longing for the end of the story—when we will one day enjoy the Promised One in the way he has always intended for us.

## Week 2

# Creation (Genesis 1:1–2:3)

### Personal Bible Study

1. In Genesis 1:1, where we read, “God created . . .,” the name of God is in its plural form, *Elohim*, and the verb used for “created” is singular. In Genesis 1:26 we read, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’” This is the first revelation in Scripture that God is one being in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They were all there, active in creation. God the Father spoke the creative words to bring the universe into being. God the Son, the eternal Word of God, carried out these creative decrees. And the Holy Spirit manifested God’s immediate presence in his creation. How do these passages add to that understanding?

- ≈ Genesis 1:2: *The Holy Spirit was hovering over the dark, wet, unformed creation, preparing to do his work of breathing life into it.*
- ≈ John 1:1–3: *Jesus, the Word, was with God in the beginning, and “all things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”*
- ≈ Colossians 1:15–16: *“All things,” without exception, were created by him, and he continually sustains his creation, preventing it from falling back into its original chaos.*

≈ Hebrews 1:2: *Jesus, God’s Son, is the one “through whom” God created the world. He was not merely a bystander.*

2. What do the following passages from outside of Genesis add to our understanding of *why* or *for what purpose* God created the world and formed humanity?

- ≈ Psalm 19:1–2: *The heavens “declare” the glory of God. It speaks, proclaiming God as creator.*
- ≈ Isaiah 43:7: *For his own glory.*
- ≈ Romans 1:20: *Creation reveals his “invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature.”*

3. In Genesis 1:2, we read that the world was “without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.” It is as if God had created all of the raw materials and they were there, waiting to be shaped and developed into a world that would be inhabitable for humans. In the following verses we discover how God addressed the formlessness, emptiness, and darkness. Using the chart below, work your way through Genesis 1:3–2:3 noting what God did on each day of creation (begin each answer with a verb).

Verse	God’s Action	Day of Creation
Gen. 1:1	<i>created heavens and earth</i>	—
Gen. 1:2	<i>hovered over waters</i>	—
Gen. 1:3	<i>spoke: “Let there be . . .”</i>	Day 1
Gen. 1:4	<i>saw that light was good separated light from darkness</i>	Day 1

Verse	God's Action	Day of Creation
Gen. 1:5	<i>called light day and darkness night</i>	Day 1
Gen. 1:6–8	<i>made the expanse by separating waters from waters</i>	Day 2
Gen. 1:9–10	<i>gathered waters and let dry land appear</i>	Day 3
Gen. 1:11–12	<i>brought forth vegetation</i>	Day 3
Gen. 1:14–16	<i>made sun and moon set sun and moon to rule over night and day</i>	Day 4
Gen. 1:17	<i>set sun and moon in the heavens</i>	Day 4
Gen. 1:20–21	<i>made waters swarm with creatures and skies swarm with birds</i>	Day 5
Gen. 1:22	<i>blessed living creatures: Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth</i>	Day 5
Gen. 1:25	<i>made creatures according to their kinds</i>	Day 6
Gen. 1:27	<i>created man in his own image</i>	Day 6
Gen. 1:28	<i>blessed mankind with purpose</i>	Day 6
Gen. 1:29–30	<i>gave plants for food</i>	Day 6
Gen. 1:31	<i>saw everything he had made and deemed it good</i>	Day 6
Gen. 2:2	<i>finished his work and rested</i>	Day 7
Gen. 2:3	<i>blessed the seventh day and made it holy</i>	Day 7

4. Genesis 1:26 says that we were made in the image of God, which means that we are *like God*, and that we were made to *represent God*. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says in answer to the question, “What is God?”: “God is a spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” How does this help us to understand some of the ways Adam and Eve were made in God’s likeness, and yet not exactly like him?

*Adam and Eve were like God in their intellectual ability, moral purity, spiritual nature, creativity, relational nature, dignity, ability to make ethical choices, and in their ability to recognize value and beauty. But they were not infinite, eternal, or unchangeable.*

5. What does Genesis 1:26–28 reveal about what man was to do as a representative of God?

*Man was to reflect his likeness, exercise authority over creation, fill creation, tend creation, and enjoy creation.*

6. In the ancient world, a king would place images of himself (statues) in far-off provinces. The images of the king told everyone that these provinces were part of the king’s domain. How might this picture be why God made human beings in his image and placed us on this earth?

*Mankind was made in the image of God to be his representative in his kingdom. By making us his representatives and placing us on his earth, he declares that this earth belongs to him and he is the ruler over it. We belong to him and are responsible to him.*

7. One of the key words in Genesis 1 is “good.” It appears seven times, and the seventh time it’s intensified to “very good.” Think about this for a minute. When God’s word went out and formed and filled creation, God saw it and deemed that it was good. What does this tell you about God, about the world, and about yourself?

- ☞ About God: *What he makes is good. He defines good. When I look at something he has made and decide it is not good, I am seeking to redefine “good” on my terms.*
- ☞ About the world: *God was pleased with the world he made. It reflects something about his love of order and beauty. Just as he intends to redeem and restore mankind to our original goodness, so will he redeem and restore the earth and all that is in it and above it to its original goodness.*
- ☞ About myself: *I am not worthless. The image of God in me is tarnished by sin, and there is still much about me that needs to be made new, but I still retain much of the image of God, and that is valuable and pleasing to God.*

8. When Adam and Eve sinned, the image of God in them became distorted, but it was not lost completely. And when we come to the New Testament we discover that redemption in Christ means that we can progressively grow in our likeness of God.

What can be restored in the “new self,” according to Colossians 3:10 and Ephesians 4:24?

*As we, growing in righteousness and holiness, come to know our Creator, we can embrace the covenant of relationship with God and live lives set apart to please him.*

How does this happen, according to 2 Corinthians 3:18?

*As we look at the glory of the Lord, the Spirit transforms us from one degree of glory to another.*

When will this work of God be complete, according to 1 John 3:2?

*When Christ returns we will be like him—fully redeemed in our bodies as well as our souls to live with him forever.*

9. In practical terms, how can we experience the newness that comes from the power of God’s

word—his written Word—according to these verses?

- ☞ Romans 12:2: *Rather than having my perspective, opinions, and thought patterns shaped by the world around me, the word of God must transform me by changing my mind—changing how I think, testing my desires and plans.*
- ☞ Colossians 3:16: *I can’t have a casual or occasional relationship to God’s Word. It must go deep inside me so that it nourishes me, teaches me, and admonishes me.*
- ☞ Hebrews 4:12–13: *Let it penetrate me, cutting me to the core (which will probably be painful). Listen for how God’s Word discerns my thoughts and exposes my real motives. Let it stand over me as my judge rather than having me stand over God’s Word making judgments about it. Stop trying to hide from God and let the Word cut away what needs to go so that I do not fear being exposed on that day when I will give account for my life.*

10. If you have a desire for the newness that only comes as the Word of God accomplishes its work in your life, write out your commitment to this study of Genesis. How much time will you give to it? When will you schedule that time? How will you respond to the Word as it speaks to you? In what way(s) do you want it to make you new?

*Personal response.*

11. How does the Genesis account of creation point to Christ? The New Testament passages in the chart below will help us see the connections. As we do this exercise and those like it in subsequent lessons, we’ll discover that the Old Testament points to Christ in a number of different ways. In some passages we’ll see the presence of the preincarnate Christ. We’ll see problems that only he will solve, promises that only he will fulfill, and needs that only he can meet. We’ll discover informative parallels between Christ and various people, symbols, and events, as well as significant contrasts that will help us to understand significant aspects of the person and work of Christ. We’ll see connections to Christ’s life and teaching as well as themes and patterns

that paint a picture for us of God's saving work through Christ. Most significantly, we'll see evidence of God's sovereign control of history that assures us that history is proceeding according to a divine plan.

In Genesis 1, we see that God prepared our planet to become the home of man, and, above all, the scene of his supreme revelation of redemption through Jesus Christ. As we consider how pleasing mankind was to God in man's original state, how God's blessing made him fruitful

and gave his life purpose and meaning, we can also see how the God-man, Jesus Christ, perfectly fulfilled what God originally intended for mankind, and how Christ has done what is necessary to restore mankind to be even better than the original design and destiny.

Using the chart below, look up the passages about Christ in the second column and state the connection to the creation account. Your answers don't need to be wordy. Some connections will be obvious and some more complex. See the example in the first block.

Creation	Christ
"In the beginning, God created." (Gen. 1:1)	Ps. 33:6; John 1:1-3 <i>Jesus was the Word going out at creation and doing the work of creation.</i>
"The Spirit of God was hovering." (Gen. 1:2)	Luke 1:34-35 <i>Just as the Spirit hovered over the deep, preparing to breathe new life into it, so did the Spirit "come upon" Mary, conceiving new life in her womb, the life of Jesus.</i>
"And God said . . ." (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 28, 29)	John 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:20-23 <i>God gave the direction and Jesus, the Word, produced creation. All things were created through Jesus. Just as the Word of God gave birth to all things, so does the Word of God give new birth.</i>
"And there was light." (Gen. 1:3)	Isa. 9:2; John 8:12; Rev. 21:23-24 <i>Jesus is the Light of the World. In the new heaven and the new earth, the light of Christ will once again be the light of the world with no need for sun or moon.</i>
"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." (Gen. 1:26)	Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3 <i>While humans were made in the likeness of God, reflecting what he is like, Jesus was not "in the image" but was "the image of the invisible God." He is the "exact imprint of his nature."</i>
"Let them have dominion." (Gen. 1:26)	Eph. 1:21-22; Rev. 5:9-10 <i>Jesus fulfilled this mandate perfectly and forever in our place and will one day share this dominion with us.</i>
"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply.'" (Gen. 1:28)	Luke 1:42; John 12:24; 15:16 <i>Jesus was the "fruit" of Adam and Eve as their offspring. He was also fruitful himself, giving life to all who believe through his death. Just as God did in the garden, Jesus gives his followers the command to be fruitful.</i>
"Fill the earth." (Gen. 1:28)	Matt. 28:18-20 <i>Jesus commanded his followers to fill the earth with the gospel and promised to be with them.</i>
"Subdue it." (Gen. 1:28)	Heb. 2:5-9 <i>While we know that mankind has not lived up to this mandate to subdue the earth, Christ has. Through Christ, we fulfill this original mandate.</i>

Creation	Christ
"It was very good." (Gen. 1:31)	Matt. 3:17 <i>God had not pronounced "very good" on any human being again until Jesus. He was the one with whom God was "well-pleased."</i>
"God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." (Gen. 2:3)	Isa. 11:10; Matt. 11:28 <i>Jesus is our rest, the one who provides rest for our souls.</i>

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## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. It's true that we love *new*, isn't it? What is something you have enjoyed particularly when it was new or because it was new? Of what do you wish you had a "new one" even now?

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. Let's open to Genesis 1. In a sense, verses 1 and 2 present a situation that God addresses in the rest of the chapter. What is the situation and what did God do?

*The creation was empty, formless, and dark. God filled, formed, and lit it.*

3. In the Personal Bible Study, you were asked to list what God did in the days of creation. What stood out to you?

4. Genesis 1 tells us that God made us in his own image. How would you explain to someone what it means to be made in the image of God and why this is significant?

*Being made in God's image gives us great dignity and gives our lives meaning. By making us in his own image and placing us in his creation, we were made to represent him in the world.*

5. Many of the things we discover about God, the world, and humanity from Genesis 1:1–2:3 go against common beliefs in the culture around

us. How would you use Genesis 1 and 2 to challenge the following statements?

☞ This world as we know it was formed by chance as new forms of life developed from matter that spontaneously became more complex.

*This world was not formed by chance but by the power of God speaking it into being.*

☞ The sun, moon, and stars influence a person's destiny.

*It is God who set the sun, moon, and stars in their places. They have no power in our lives to shape our destiny. God ordains our lives from beginning to end.*

☞ God is one with nature.

*All nature is a creation of God; it is not God or an extension of God.*

☞ The human body is inherently evil.

*God created humans and deemed us to be "very good."*

☞ Every thing and every day is equally sacred as well as ordinary.

*God appointed one day in seven to be holy or set apart to him.*

☞ What makes a person good is how he or she treats the people and the world around him or her.

*God is good. God defines good. When God made us, we were good, and he is at work redeeming us to make us perfectly and purely good again.*

≈ God was lonely, so he created people.

*God was not lonely, but existed in perfect fellowship in the Trinity from before he made the world and created human beings. God created humans not because he was lonely but to glorify himself.*

7. Genesis 2:7 tells us that “God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” How should this knowledge impact how we see ourselves?

*Once again this gives us dignity to know that God so intimately gave us life by breathing his own breath into us.*

8. How does God’s breathing into humanity’s nostrils the breath of life picture what God does in someone who comes to life spiritually (regeneration)?

*In regeneration, God gives spiritual life to a person who is spiritually dead. Some people have a hard time thinking of themselves as spiritually dead and unable to respond to God at all apart from God’s breathing life into them. We tend to think that we have always been alive and just needed a little kick to become more alive. But just as God breathed life into inanimate dust to bring us to life physically, so does God breathe his own life into us spiritually to bring us from death to life spiritually.*

### Getting Personal

9. The big question of this week was, “How can I begin again?” In Genesis 1 we’ve seen the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in their creative, life-giving work. And we recognize that it is the same Father, Son, and Spirit who work in us now to give us new life. Some people can point to a spe-

cific date when they know that they were born a second time—changed by God from a spiritually dead person into a spiritually alive person. Others, especially some who grew up hearing about Christ, or those who attend a Bible study over a period of time and grow gradually in their understanding of the gospel, may have a hard time nailing down a particular point in time when they were reborn. But that instantaneous event was there nonetheless when God through the Holy Spirit, in an unseen, invisible way, called each one to new spiritual life. It is this work of God that gives us the spiritual ability to respond to God in faith. Would any of you be willing to tell us about how God’s Word and the Spirit of God brought you to life spiritually and how it changed you?

### Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

10. Throughout this study, we are seeking to grasp how the passage we’re studying fits into the bigger story of God’s plan of redemption. How does Genesis 1 help us understand not only how history began but also where history is headed?

*You may want to read the “How Genesis Points to What Is Yet to Come” together here or perhaps invite participants to bring in its content. The key is that Genesis 1 and 2 show us the garden as a perfect environment where God dwelt with his created people in perfect relationship. This shows us what is ahead for us in the new heaven and the new earth, described in Revelation 21 and 22 as a garden paradise where we will once again live in a perfect environment, in perfect relationship with God and each other.*

*Week 3*

# The Fall (Genesis 2:4–3:24)

## Personal Bible Study

1. Read Genesis 2:4–25. Briefly describe what Eden was like and the life that Adam and Eve enjoyed there.

*Eden was a verdant garden paradise. Adam was given life, purpose, and everything he could ever need or want by God. He was even given a helper who was the perfect complement to him. Adam and Eve enjoyed the abundance of the garden as well as an unfettered intimacy with their Father God and each other.*

2. Genesis 2 ends by telling us that Adam and Eve were “both naked and were not ashamed” (v. 25). What do you think this means?

*Before they sinned, Adam and Eve had no cause for embarrassment or shame. They could be completely exposed without fear. They could be fully and freely themselves*

*because they had nothing to hide from each other, from God, or from their own eyes. Their physical nakedness represented a spiritual nakedness.*

3. From other passages in Scripture, we know that there is such a being as Satan. He was created perfect but fell away from virtue through pride, and he carried many other angelic beings with him in his rebellion against God. He presented himself in the garden at the beginning of history as a serpent to tempt the first man and woman. What light do these verses give us on the identity and actions of this Serpent?

- ≈ Matthew 13:19: *The “evil one” snatches away God’s word that has been sown in a person’s heart.*
- ≈ John 12:31: *The “ruler of this world” will ultimately be “cast out.”*
- ≈ Revelation 12:9: *“The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.”*



4. In the chart below, compare the record of what God said to Adam in Genesis 2:9, 16, and 17 with how the Serpent and Eve portray what he said in Genesis 3:1–5. How did they challenge and change God’s word?

God	Serpent/Eve	Challenge and Change
“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.” (2:16–17)	Serpent: “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” (3:1)	<i>Satan diminished God’s generous provision and expanded God’s prohibition, making it seem unreasonable and ridiculous.</i>
“You may surely eat of every tree of the garden.” (2:16)	Eve: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden.” (3:2)	<i>Eve diminished God’s generous provision and conveniently ignored God’s prohibition.</i>
“The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (2:9)	Eve: “The tree that is in the midst of the garden.” (3:3)	<i>Eve conveniently forgot the tree of life and focused instead on the forbidden tree and thus weakened God’s lavish provision from which she was free to eat.</i>



"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat." (2:17)	Eve: "You shall not eat . . . neither shall you touch it." (3:3)	<i>Eve assumed she could modify God's word to suit her purposes of casting God in unreasonably restrictive light by amplifying his prohibition.</i>
"You shall surely die." (2:17)	Eve: "Lest you die." (3:3)	<i>Eve diminished the consequence from certain death to the possibility of death.</i>
"For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (2:17)	Serpent: "You will not surely die." (3:4)	<i>Satan directly contradicted God's word, suggesting to Eve that God cannot be trusted.</i>

5. What do we learn from this scene of temptation and sin about how Satan tempts us and what it takes to stand firm against temptation?

*Satan probably didn't appear to be evil, but was likely beautiful and appealing. But they should have judged him as evil. Instead they listened as he ridiculed God's word, questioned God's word, added to God's word, and finally refuted God's word. Rather than rejecting outright what he said and running to God to report Satan's blasphemy, Eve entertained his ideas, allowing them to fill her with discontent with God's provision and doubt about God's goodness. Adam evidently was passive in the process.*

*To have stood firm against temptation would have required that they speak God's true word back to the Serpent, reject his lies, and go directly to God to report this rebellion.*

6. Read Genesis 3:6. What were the three appeals to Eve that led her to take and eat?

*The fruit "was good for food"—she evaluated and convinced herself it would be good for her even though God had forbidden it.*

*"It was a delight to the eyes"—it was beautiful to her as she allowed herself to define what is beautiful rather than depending on God's definition of beauty.*

*It "was to be desired to make one wise"—she believed Satan's suggestion that this would make her wise like God, so that she would be able to judge what is good and what is evil. She did not realize that real wisdom is fearing and obeying God and that if she ate of it, she would then remember the good and experience the bitterness of evil.*

7. Adam and Eve sought to cover up their sin by making coverings for themselves of fig leaves, but this was inadequate. What are some modern-day cover-ups and excuses we try to string together to make ourselves okay with God?

*Fig leaves: good works, good behavior, religious sincerity, religious ancestry*

*Excuses: "I am human!" "This is what I learned from the family you placed me in." "This is the way you made me." "I didn't know any better." "I'm no worse than anybody else; in fact I'm better than most people." "I'm just doing what comes naturally."*

8. God entered the garden looking for Adam and Eve, and he asked three questions in verses 9 and 11. What are they, and why do you think he asked them?

*God asks: "Where are you?" (2:9) and, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (2:11)*

*Of course God already knew the answers to these questions, but he knew it would serve a redemptive purpose for Adam and Eve to be asked to answer them. As sinners we must recognize and confess that we are away from God, that we have sinned against God, and that our sin has created a barrier between us and God. This confession is what leads us to repentance.*

9. In Genesis 3:15, God's curse on the Serpent states that an offspring of the woman will "bruise" or "crush" the Serpent's head, while the Serpent will bruise the heel of the promised off-

spring. What do the following Scriptures reveal about how Satan bruised the “heel” of the offspring of the woman, Jesus Christ?

- ☞ Matthew 16:23: *Satan used Peter to tempt Jesus to avoid the cross.*
- ☞ John 8:39–44: *The religious leaders sought to kill Jesus, and Jesus said they were of their father the Devil and their will was to do what the Devil desires.*
- ☞ John 13:2: *The Devil put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus.*

10. How do the following Scriptures reveal how Christ has and will bruise or crush the “head” of Satan?

- ☞ Colossians 2:13–15: *Demonic powers were stripped of their power to accuse Christians before God when our record of wrong was nailed to the cross of Christ and canceled.*
- ☞ Hebrews 2:14–15: *Through his death on the cross, Christ took away the sin that gives the Devil the power of death; therefore, the Devil’s power is destroyed.*
- ☞ Revelation 12:11: *Satan is conquered through the faithful testimony offered by believers.*
- ☞ Revelation 20:7–10: *At the end of history, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where he will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

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11. In Genesis 3:4–24 we begin to see how things changed dramatically after Adam and Eve’s sin. In the chart below, see if you can identify some of the things that changed. (The first space has been filled in for you as an example).

<b>Before the Fall</b>	<b>After the Fall</b>
Adam and Eve were made in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26)	<i>The image of God in Adam and Eve became marred by sin.</i>
Adam and Eve exercised dominion or authority over the animals. (Gen. 1:26)	<i>The animal world is no longer peaceful or submissive to Adam and Eve.</i>
Adam and Eve lived under God’s blessing. (Gen. 1:28)	<i>While God did not curse Adam and Eve directly (his curse will fall on Christ as their substitute), they now live in a world that is marked through and through by a curse.</i>
Adam and Eve were given the responsibility and the ability to subdue the earth. (Gen. 1:28)	<i>To be fruitful in childbirth is now going to be pain-ridden. And they will not be able to subdue the earth but will be victimized by it in all kinds of painful ways.</i>
Adam was formed from the dust of the ground and given life. (Gen. 2:7)	<i>Now man will return to dust when he is buried in the ground after he dies physically.</i>
The plants in the garden grew easily and in abundance. (Gen. 2:9)	<i>Now the ground produces thorns and thistles, and nothing grows easily.</i>
Adam and Eve lived in the garden. (Gen. 2:15)	<i>Adam and Eve were banished from the garden, and their work now became frustrating toil.</i>
Adam and Eve enjoyed one-flesh intimacy with each other. (Gen. 2:23)	<i>Rather than a helper with whom he could enjoy perfect one-flesh intimacy, the curse brought competition and strife to the marriage relationship.</i>
Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed. (Gen. 2:25)	<i>Now they made themselves clothes and hid from God in shame and fear.</i>

12. We are so used to speaking of “Adam and Eve” that we generally fail to notice that not until Genesis 3:20 is Adam’s wife actually called “Eve.” Up to this point, she has been called a “female” (1:27), a “helper fit” for Adam (2:18), a “woman” (2:22, 23), and a “wife” (2:24, 25; 3:8). But those are all descriptive terms and not names. Why is it significant that Adam named his wife Eve, and why do you think it falls at this place in the story?

*By naming his wife Eve, Adam reveals that he had heard and believed the grace that was laced in the curse. He believes that he and Eve will receive mercy and live to have offspring and that that offspring will provide a way to live again spiritually. Adam names her Eve before she has a child or even conceives, evidencing genuine faith in God’s promise.*

13. Because of the faith of Adam expressed in the naming of Eve, God did for Adam and Eve what they could not do adequately for themselves: he provided a covering of animal skins, perhaps the

skin of a lamb. How does this point to the covering God has provided for us in our sin?

*For Adam and Eve to be clothed with the skins of animals means the animal had to die. In a similar way, in order for us to be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is what the skins symbolized, Jesus had to die. It was necessary for the Innocent One to die in order that the guilty might live.*

14. God had promised that if they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they would surely die. Now an animal has been slain, but they are still alive. What should this have told them about sin and about God?

*The horror of their first glimpse of death as they looked at the dead animal’s carcass showed them that sin is far worse than they imagined. Surely that made them determined to refuse to sin and to be obedient to God. It also showed them the mercy of God, who, though he had every right to take their lives, accepted the death of an innocent substitute.*



15. How does the account of Adam and Eve’s fall point to Christ? Find the connections in the New Testament passages below, following the example given in the first block of the chart.

The Fall	Christ
“The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground.” (Gen. 2:7)	1 Cor. 15:47–49 <i>Just as Adam was made of dust and returned to dust when he died, so are we made of dust. But Christ remakes us into his image so that our bodies will be resurrected and glorified.</i>
“The LORD God . . . breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” (Gen. 2:7)	John 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:45; 1 John 5:12 <i>While Adam was given physical life by God breathing it into him, Christ breathes spiritual life into us through the Spirit.</i>
“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Gen. 2:17)	Matt. 26:26; John 6:51–52 <i>Adam and Eve lost spiritual life by “taking and eating” that which was prohibited. But it is also through the act of taking and eating that spiritual and eternal life is restored—as we take and eat of Christ’s body.</i>
“A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24)	Eph. 1:23; 5:31–32 <i>The one-flesh love and unity of husband and wife pictures the one-flesh love and unity of Christ with his bride, the church.</i>
“She took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.” (Gen. 3:6)	Rom. 5:12–21 <i>Adam was “a type of the one who was to come” which is Christ. God intended that the sin-bringing Adam would point us to the sin-bearing second Adam. While the sin of Adam brought death, the righteousness of Christ brings life.</i>

The Fall	Christ
"They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." (Gen. 3:8)	Luke 19:10 <i>God is always the initiator. Just as he walked in the garden seeking after Adam and Eve, who were hiding because of their sin, so Jesus came to "seek and save" those lost in sin.</i>
"Cursed are you. . . . Cursed is the ground because of you." (Gen. 3:14, 17)	Gal. 3:13–14; Rev. 22:3 <i>Because of sin, the creation of God that had been blessed by God became cursed. But Christ came to take this curse upon himself so that we might again know and experience the blessing of God and will one day live in a new earth in which "no longer will there be anything accursed."</i>
"Cursed is the ground because of you; . . . thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you." (Gen. 3:17–18)	John 19:2 <i>Thorns were a particularly vivid evidence of the curse brought on all creation by sin. So it is fitting that Jesus wore a crown of thorns as he took upon himself the curse of sin on the cross.</i>
"I will put enmity between . . . your offspring and her offspring." (Gen. 3:15)	Mark 1:24 <i>Jesus, who repeatedly exercised power over demons, is the ultimate offspring of the woman.</i>
"He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:15)	Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Rev. 20:7–10 <i>Satan "bruised" Christ's heel on the cross, but Christ thereby "bruised his head" taking the power of death away from Satan. Satan will ultimately be destroyed by Christ.</i>
"The LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them." (Gen. 3:21)	Isa. 61:10; Rom. 4:7; Rev. 3:14–18 <i>Just as God provided covering for Adam and Eve's nakedness and shame by slaying an innocent animal and covering them with its skins, so has God provided covering for our sin and shame through the death of the Innocent One, covering us in his righteousness.</i>
"He drove out the man, and . . . placed the cherubim and a flaming sword . . . to guard the way to the tree of life." (Gen. 3:24)	John 14:6; Heb. 10:19–22; Rev. 22:2 <i>Jesus is the way back into life. Rather than being banished and forbidden to approach God, through Christ we are welcomed to boldly approach God. This Tree of Life will be in the middle of the New Jerusalem, which we will be welcomed to enter in the consummation.</i>

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## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. Imagine for moment, if you can, what it must have been like to live in the garden of Eden before the Serpent slithered in with his temptation. What would have been wonderful about that pre-fall existence Adam and Eve enjoyed?

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. God did not explain to Adam *why* eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was

prohibited. He simply expected them to trust and obey him. Usually we don't mind obeying as long as it makes sense to us. Why do you think God did not explain the logic behind this prohibition?

*As humans we are usually willing to submit if what is being required of us makes sense to us. But God is asking for greater trust than that; he demands that we honor him and obey him by allowing him to define right and wrong by his word.*

3. Notice that God was not in the garden all the time. He came to walk in the garden in the cool of

the day, but for the most part, Adam and Eve had to operate on God's word that had been given to them. That is what faith is still about: living according to what God has said. What makes living by faith so challenging?

*Faith is being sure of what we hope for and believing in what we can't see. This does not come naturally to us. We like to have reasons to be willing to follow instructions and God does not always spell out his reasons for us. He call us to trust him.*

4. Looking back at the Personal Bible Study you worked on, what was especially interesting or challenging to you?

5. What do we learn about how to successfully withstand temptation when we compare the way Adam and Eve dealt with temptation to the way Christ handled the temptations of the Devil?

*The importance of knowing of God's Word and having it ingrained in us is to refute the lies of the enemy.*

6. Though we think of Genesis 3 as being primarily about sin and the curse, there are also some wonderful pictures of grace and presentations of the gospel. How do you see the gospel of grace in this part of God's story?

*It is seen in the promise of an offspring who will suffer but be victorious over the Serpent, and in the provision of a covering for sin and shame provided wholly by God but requiring the death of an innocent substitute.*

7. Many people feel and express anger toward God when the brokenness of this world impacts them in ways that bring pain. How could you use what you've learned in this study of Genesis 3 (perhaps also using the truths in Romans 8 and Revelation 21 and 22) to help someone who is angry with God to put the blame where it belongs and place their hope in Christ?

*It is sin that has brought so much pain and brokenness, not God inflicting it on innocent people. And while God had every right to destroy humanity because of sin, instead he is working out his plan of redemption, to bring healing to humanity and the whole creation so that there will be no more pain and everything that was broken will be healed and restored.*

## Getting Personal

8. The big idea of this week was that we do not have to keep hiding from God, from each other, and from ourselves. We can come clean with God. There is a way to be good again. What do you think it takes to really believe this and live in the freedom and joy of this truth?

*We have to fill our minds with the truth of Scripture so that we can begin to really believe that God's grace is good enough and powerful enough to bring us back into relationship with him rather than to condemn us.*

## Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. Throughout this study, we're seeking to grasp how the passage we're studying fits into the bigger story of God's plan for redemption. An argument could be made that none of the rest of the Bible would make sense if it did not include Genesis 3. How would you support that argument? How does Genesis 3 help us to make sense of the rest of the Bible, of the world we live in, of ourselves?

*Without this story of the fall and the infiltration of brokenness and disorder, there would be no need for a savior, deliverer, and redeemer, which is the rest of the Bible's story. Without this revelation of how humanity became marked by sin, we would not be able to make sense of the goodness of humanity along with its brokenness in this world. Once again, you may want to read together the "How Genesis Points to What Is Yet to Come" to add insight to this part of the discussion.*

*Week 4*

# Noah and the Flood (Genesis 6–9)

## Personal Bible Study

1. Skim chapter 5 of Genesis, reading verses 28–32 more carefully. What is the pattern repeated in this account of the descendants of Adam?

*They each lived X number of years and then died.*

2. What does the name Lamech gave to his son, Noah, indicate about his hopes for this child?

*Noah's name meant "rest" or "comfort." Lamech hopes that Noah will be the promised Seed who will break the curse that has made the ground so difficult to cultivate and has brought death to every generation.*

3. Read Genesis 6:1–7. There are numerous speculations on what exactly the “sons of God” having children with the “daughters of man” means and who the Nephilim were, and it is difficult to determine definitively from the biblical text. But we do know that the “sons of God” are those who by faith walk with God. So why is it a problem that these “sons of God” are marrying the “daughters of man” who do not by faith walk with God?

*The sons of God should marry daughters of God to preserve the godly line and grow into a faithful, covenant*

*family dominating the earth. Instead, they are choosing women to marry not on the basis of faith but on the basis of outward appearance—women who will lead them into sin and away from God.*

4. Remembering that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7), what does he mean when he says, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever” (Gen. 6:3)?

*God is going to take back the breath of life that he gave to man at creation. While the 120 years may mean that the lifespan of human beings will no longer exceed 120 years, more likely it means that mankind has only 120 more years to live before being destroyed by the flood.*

5. What does Genesis 6:5–6 reveal about the heart of man and the heart of God?

*Man's heart—wicked, every intention of the thoughts of his heart is only evil. He never has a pure motive or pure thought.*

*God's heart—sorry, regretful, grieved.*

*Man's heart has no love for God that would change his own, no thoughts toward God that would inform his own, no recognition of his sin so that his heart might be broken like God's. God is not a cold Creator, but a loving Father. His heart is broken over a world that has utterly rejected him and has chosen only evil.*

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6. How does the picture presented in Genesis 6:5–7 differ from or serve as a contrast to that of Genesis 1 and 2? (See especially 1:21–31.) Note the contrast in the second column of the chart below.

<p>“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31)</p>	<p>Gen. 6:5 <i>The Lord saw wickedness.</i></p>
<p>“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’” (Gen. 1:26)</p>	<p>Gen. 6:6–7a <i>I will blot out man.</i></p>
<p>“So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.” (Gen. 1:21)</p>	<p>Gen. 6:7 <i>I will blot out animals, creeping things, birds.</i></p>

7. God is so grieved by what he sees in the heart of man that he wants to uncreate what he created. What reason can you think of that he cannot destroy all of humanity?

*God made a promise that the offspring of the woman will bruise the head of the Serpent. God cannot and will not go back on his promise. From before the foundations of the world, it has been his plan to display his glory through Christ, the promised Seed, and man's sin cannot frustrate that plan.*

8. In this bleak and seemingly hopeless scene, there is still hope. How would you describe the hope in Genesis 6:8?

*The grace or favor of God, which he bestows on undeserving sinners to accomplish his good and gracious purposes, is still present. Because God granted favor to Noah, he and his family will be the faithful remnant of humanity to establish a new humanity in a world washed clean by the flood.*

9. In Genesis 6:9, we learn that Noah was “a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.” Which came first: the favor or grace of God, or Noah’s righteousness, and why does this matter?

*The favor or grace came first, which enabled and empowered Noah to live a righteous life, embracing the covenant of God from the heart. This grace gave him a taste for holiness so that while he was not sinless, he did not pursue a life of sin, which made him “blameless.” Only grace given by God inclines a sinner to walk with God.*

10. In contrast to Noah, who was righteous, Genesis 6:11 says that all people and the whole earth were corrupt and that God had determined to destroy them. God gave Noah instructions to build an ark that would hold Noah and his family and two of every living thing. What does this signal about God’s intentions in the flood and after the flood, and what does God state about his intentions in regard to Noah?

*God intends to destroy all living things outside the ark, but to preserve the life of those in the ark. The human and animal life preserved inside the ark will emerge after the flood to “be fruitful and multiply” and thereby repopulate the earth. Noah will be like a new Adam, the father of a new humanity.*

11. Read Genesis 6:11–8:19. What are two or three details from these verses about the flood and Noah’s experience that stand out to you as significant. Why?

*Noah’s complete obedience.*

- ≈ *Waters from above and below, which had been separated at creation converged.*
- ≈ *Only those on the ark were saved.*
- ≈ *Judgment still fell on Noah, but he was protected in it.*
- ≈ *“God remembered Noah” repeats biblical language indicating God acted on his behalf.*
- ≈ *“God made a wind blow over the earth” similar to the Spirit hovering in Genesis 1:2, and wind that turned back the Red Sea and the Jordan River, as well as the Spirit that makes us alive.*
- ≈ *This is a picture of resurrected life to a new heaven and a new earth.*

12. Recognizing that the day is coming when the world and all that are in it will once again fall under God’s judgment, what can we learn from this story about (1) the nature of that judgment; (2) who and what will be destroyed by it; (3) who will be preserved in it; and (4) what we can expect after it?

- ≈ *Just as God promised judgment and then it came, so will the future judgment God has promised surely come.*
- ≈ *Judgment falls on all, but some are protected and hidden in Christ.*
- ≈ *All who have not hidden themselves in Christ will perish.*
- ≈ *Those preserved are only those who obey God by entering into the ark of Christ.*
- ≈ *Judgment has not only a punishing purpose but also a cleansing purpose. After judgment we can expect to live in a cleansed creation where we will have a life of fruitfulness.*

13. Using the chart below, compare and contrast God’s blessing and instructions to Noah with those God gave to Adam at creation.

“God blessed them.” (Gen. 1:28)	Gen. 9:1 <i>God blessed Noah and his sons.</i>
“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” (Gen. 1:28)	Gen. 9:1 <i>“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” (Man retains his dominion over the animals, but the animals are no longer his willing subjects.)</i>
“Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.” (Gen. 1:29)	Gen. 9:3 <i>“Every living thing that lives shall be food for you.”</i>

14. Read 9:8–17. How would you sum up the covenant promise God made, and why do you think he made it?

*If God keeps wiping out the earth because of the wickedness of men, then no one will survive—not even Noah. But God must keep his promise that the Seed of the woman will crush the Serpent’s head and break the curse over all creation. The covenant promise was made with Noah and his descendants and with all the animals that God will never again destroy the earth and all living things by a flood. Noah and his sons have no more responsibility to keep this covenant than do the cattle or birds. God will keep this covenant himself. Noah and his descendants must simply believe God. Yet even those who do not believe God will benefit from this promise of grace.*

15. Read the following verses in which God’s “bow” is described:

If a man does not repent, God will whet his sword;  
he has bent and readied his bow;  
the has prepared for him his deadly weapons,  
making his arrows fiery shafts.  
(Ps. 7:12–13)

He has bent his bow like an enemy,  
with his right hand set like a foe . . .

he has poured out his fury like fire.  
(Lam. 2:4)

Then the LORD will appear over them,  
and his arrow will go forth like lightning.  
(Zech. 9:14)

How might these verses offer insight into the imagery God used when he said to Noah, “I have set my bow in the cloud” as a sign of his covenant promise not to destroy the earth and all flesh again?

*God has hung up his “bow”—his weapon of judgment. He is no longer at war with the earth. The only reason he can do this is that he will pour out his wrathful fury on his own son. Jesus will receive the fatal arrows we deserve.*

16. When Adam sinned, his shameful nakedness had to be covered in a provision from God, and Noah’s shameful nakedness must also ultimately be covered by a provision from God. Go back to Genesis 6:8. What has God provided to cover Noah’s shameful nakedness?

*Grace. God has taken great care to cover our sin through the atoning work of Christ, which is applied to us through his work of grace. “Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Ps. 32:1, cf. Rom. 4:7).*



17. How does Noah point to Christ? Look up the verses in the second column of the chart below and write a statement that relates to the statement about Noah in the first column.

Noah	Christ
Noah's name means "rest." (Gen. 5:28–29)	Isa. 11:10; Matt. 11:28 <i>Jesus is our rest. He is the one who provides rest for our souls.</i>
"Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD." (Gen. 6:8)	Matt. 3:17 <i>Jesus found favor in his Father's eyes. He was the one with whom God was "well-pleased."</i>
"Noah was a righteous man." (Gen. 6:9)	Luke 23:47 <i>Jesus is the only truly righteous man who has ever lived.</i>
Noah was "blameless in his generation." (Gen. 6:9)	Luke 1:35 <i>Jesus was blameless in his generation—perfectly holy.</i>
Noah "walked with God." (Gen. 6:9)	Luke 2:52; 4:4; 6:12 <i>Jesus lived day by day in close connection with God by feeding on his Word, through prayer, and obedience.</i>
Noah was given work to do by God—to build an ark that would provide protection from judgment. (Gen. 6:14–21)	John 17:4 <i>Jesus was given work to do by God—to provide protection from judgment through the work of the cross.</i>
Noah's work resulted in the "saving of his household" and "every living thing." (Gen. 8:17; Heb. 11:7)	Heb. 3:6; Rom. 8:21 <i>Christ's work resulted in the saving of all of those given to him by the Father, and it will come to completion in the restoration of the entire created order.</i>
Noah did "all that God commanded him." (Gen. 6:22; 7:5)	John 15:10; Phil. 2:8 <i>Jesus gladly did everything his God told him to do, going as far as to submit to a cruel and shameful death on the cross.</i>
Noah brought his whole family and every living creature out of the ark with him. (Gen. 8:18–19)	Isa. 11:6–7; John 18:9 <i>Jesus will bring all of those the Father entrusted to him safely into eternity with him.</i>

18. How does the ark point to Christ? Look up the verses in the second column of the chart below to write a statement about Christ that relates to the statement about the ark in the first column.

Ark	Christ
The ark was a divine provision of grace. (Gen. 6:13–14)	John 3:16; Rev. 13:8 <i>Christ is a divine provision of grace.</i>
The ark was a refuge from divine judgment. (Gen. 6:17–18)	Acts 4:12; Rom. 5:9–10 <i>Christ is the only refuge for sinners, who deserve divine judgment. We enter into him and are saved.</i>
God invited Noah and his family to come into the ark. (Gen. 7:1)	Matt. 11:28; Acts 16:31 <i>Christ invites all to come to him to find rest, a salvation that is not just individual but a covenant of grace for families.</i>

<p>The ark was a place of absolute security. (Gen. 6:14; 7:16; 8:18–19)</p>	<p>John 10:28; 18:9; Col. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:5  <i>The believer's life is hidden in Christ and secured there by the power of God so that nothing can harm him.</i></p>
<p>The ark bore the judgment of God in the form of the flood. (Gen. 7:17–18)</p>	<p>John 12:32–33; 1 Pet. 2:24  <i>Jesus bore the judgment of God that we deserve. It all fell on him.</i></p>
<p>All of those outside the ark perished. (Gen. 7:21–23)</p>	<p>Acts 13:40–41  <i>All of those who are outside of Christ will endure the judgment of God and will perish eternally.</i></p>



## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. If you had been a news photographer during the time of Noah as he prepared for and built the ark, and as he gathered the animals and prepared to enter the boat, and after the rain started falling, what interesting scenes might you have captured? Are there any animals you wish had missed the ship?

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. In the Teaching Chapter, we saw that Noah was a sinner saved by grace, protected by grace, and preserved by grace. Let's work our way through these three. First, when we read that "Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD," or that "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD," what does that mean?

*Noah received from God an acceptance that he could not and did not earn or deserve, that did not come to him because of anything in himself, but solely as a gift of God.*

3. Has it always been your understanding that God initiated and provided Noah's righteousness, or like Nancy described as her own past understanding, have you thought that Noah was the only righteous one and, because of that, he found favor with God? What difference does it make?

*To assume that Noah somehow worked up in himself the righteousness that made him worthy to be chosen by*

*God to escape the judgment of the ark implies that Noah had done something to deserve this favor from God and gives Noah glory that is reserved for God alone. But to recognize that God chose Noah and provided Noah with the righteousness by grace reflects the reality that God is sovereign over all things and always provides to us everything he demands from us.*

4. As we see Noah and his family and the animals protected inside the ark, we discover an Old Testament picture of the saving work of Jesus Christ. All who "hide" in Christ will be protected from judgment. As you made the connections in the Personal Bible Study section between the ark and how it pictures Christ, which aspects were most meaningful to you?

5. As Nancy described, we tend to turn this into a cute children's story, and even as adults we are pained to face up to the stark reality of the divine judgment and gruesome death in this story. Why do you think we are so uncomfortable with it, and why is it important that we not conveniently delete it from the story?

*We are uncomfortable with this story because we are generally uncomfortable with the wrath of God. Our culture sees humans as basically good and deserving of God's acceptance rather than as evil and deserving of God's judgment. If we delete God's divine wrath from this story, it reflects our desire to delete this from God's holy character and seeks to make God in our own image rather than glorifying him for who he is in reality.*

6. Though Noah was a righteous man in that he embraced God's covenant from the heart, he was

still a sinner. What were the signs of that when he emerged from the ark and began to build a new life on dry land?

*He built an altar and offered a sacrifice. God made provisions in the covenant and promises to Noah, anticipating that he would sin. And we see it lived out when he becomes drunk and exposes his nakedness, which is, in a sense, flaunting his sinfulness.*

7. How was Noah *preserved* by grace, and what verses in the Bible come to mind to assure you that you are preserved by grace?

*1 Corinthians 1:8*

*Ephesians 1:4*

*Philippians 1:6*

*1 Thessalonians 5:23*

*Jude 24*

### Getting Personal

8. The big question of this week was, “What will have the last word in your life?” Though Noah inherited a sin nature and was surrounded by wicked sinners, sin did not have the last word in his life. Would you be willing to share how you dealt with this question personally this week? Is there anything other than the grace provided to you in Jesus Christ that threatens to have the last word in your life?

### Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

9. Throughout this study, we’re trying to grasp how some of these familiar stories fit into the bigger story of God’s plan for redemption. How do you see the continuing threads of the promised offspring and the restoration of all things in Genesis 6–9?

*God cannot destroy all humanity because he has promised that an offspring will be born who will destroy the Serpent. God is cleansing his world and starting over with Noah, a sign that he does intend to fully restore all of creation as well as humanity.*

**A Note about This Week’s “How Genesis Points to What Is Yet to Come”:** Because Christian media

is dominated by a perspective about the return of Christ in which Christ comes in a secret rapture and takes believers away from this earth, leaving behind those who do not know Christ, many of us have always read Jesus’ statement in Matthew 24 through that lens and assumed that those “left behind” are those who rejected Christ. But the story of Noah helps us understand this more clearly. As we grow in our understanding that God intends to redeem and restore this earth, recognizing that he does not intend to take believers away from this earth but intends for us to live on a restored earth in resurrected bodies, it also becomes more compelling to us that we will not be “taken away” but “left behind” to rule and reign on the renewed earth with Christ upon his return.

When participants read this section, they may also think about 1 Thessalonians 4:16, which is also used to support the idea of a secret rapture in which believers are taken away from this earth. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 we read, “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.” Many who read this with a secret rapture of believers in mind assume that we meet the Lord in the air and then are taken away by him to heaven. But this verse does not necessarily indicate this. To understand this verse rightly we must understand the ancient custom in which the people of a city would go out to meet a returning victorious king and accompany him on his entrance into the city. That is what is being pictured here—that when Christ returns we will meet him in the air, but not to be taken away to a heaven somewhere away from this earth; rather, we will share in his victorious return to this earth as conquering and reigning King, having defeated all of his enemies.

Certainly some participants with differing perspectives on the end times will struggle with this, or perhaps reject this, but this need not become a divisive issue. It may be a matter on which we agree to see things differently while loving and respecting our brothers and sisters with whom we disagree. For all of us, it becomes a matter that should drive us deeper

into the Scriptures, seeking to understand what God is doing in this world and intends for his world. But mostly it should turn our attention to being ready for Christ's return and to longing for Christ's return, which we can all do regardless of our understanding of how all the details of his return will come about.

Week 5

# The Tower of Babel (Genesis 10:1-12:3)

## Personal Bible Study

1. Genesis 10 provides us with a “table of nations”—an overview of the descendants of Noah’s three sons. This includes where they lived and the nations that descended from each of them. Skim the chapter, noting the repeated word or idea found in Genesis 10:5, 18, and 32.

*A key word in chapter 10 is “spread” or “dispersed.”*

2. Genesis 11:1–9 actually tells us about something that happened in the middle of all the generations listed in Genesis 10. Think of it this way: chapter 11 gives us the details about what happened in Peleg’s lifetime (Gen. 10:25). While this may seem insignificant now, we’ll come back to Peleg after we learn more about what happened at Babel during his lifetime to discover why he is significant.

3. To understand the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11, we have to remember the instruction God gave to Noah and his sons in Genesis 9:1: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.” What do you think this meant, and why do you think this instruction was given by God?

*Noah and his descendants were supposed to have children, and they were supposed to spread out all over the earth. God wants to establish his kingdom in every corner of the earth, and he wanted Noah and his descendants to spread out over the earth to rule over it as ambassadors of his kingdom.*

4. Read Genesis 11:1–2. Immediately we see the problem in relation to God’s clear instruction. What is it?

*They are supposed to spread out over the whole earth but instead they have found a place to settle as one group of people, and they no longer intend to “fill the earth.”*



5. Repeatedly in verses 3–4 the people say “Come, let us . . .,” inviting all the people of Babel to work together on a great project. What do you think is the problem with their plans? Note your answers in the chart below.

The People’s Plan	The Problem
“Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” (Gen. 11:3)	<i>They are using their God-given ingenuity to make something in defiance of God rather than stewarding their intelligence and creativity in obedience to God.</i>
“Come, let us build ourselves a city.” (Gen. 11:4)	<i>This city was a way of providing their security instead of trusting God. A great city would be impressive, impenetrable, and independent from God.</i>
“Come, let us build ourselves . . . a tower with its top in the heavens.” (Gen. 11:4)	<i>A tower that reached into heaven was a way of attempting to compete with God rather than submit to God. It was a way to make themselves like God.</i>

The People's Plan	The Problem
"Come . . . let us make a name for ourselves." (Gen. 11:4)	<i>Though they were made to bring glory to God, they want glory for themselves. And rather than trust God to make a name for them, they are going to take it into their own hands to establish their own reputation.</i>
". . . lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." (Gen. 11:4)	<i>God told them to fill the earth, and they are determined not to obey.</i>

6. According to Genesis 11:6, why did God frustrate the people's attempt to accomplish this great feat?

*God created humans with tremendous intelligence, creativity, and desire for greatness. With such great gifts from God and with unity and communication, they present a great danger to themselves of misusing those gifts to build a life apart from God.*

7. How was God's action of dispersing people all over the face of the earth and giving them many different languages both a judgment and a preservation?

*It was a judgment for their defiant rebellion in seeking to build a life insulated from God and as a rival to God. It was a protection for them from creating a society that*

*was organized without reference to God, and built on their own power structures in the place of God, alienated from the presence of God. This would be doomed to destruction.*

8. Read Genesis 12:1–3. How do these three verses offer tremendous hope in light of the grim situation of humanity in Genesis 10–11?

*Here is blessing promised by God and not a curse. It is another new beginning. God promises to provide Abraham with what the people of Babel sought to obtain without God—to be a great nation, to have a great name. There is hope for God's world because of God's promise to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham. This blessing will come primarily through Abraham's most significant descendant, the promised offspring Jesus Christ.*

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9. Using the chart below, compare Genesis 11:1–9 with Acts 2:1–11, looking for contrasts between what happened in Babel and what happened at Pentecost.

Babel	Pentecost
The people used their own initiative to gather together to make plans apart from God, in defiance of God.	<i>The disciples gathered together to pray and wait for God to take the initiative to give them the power they needed to accomplish the commission Jesus had given them.</i>
Human beings sought to climb their way up to God.	<i>God came down in the person of the Holy Spirit.</i>
Communication was restricted, as people could no longer understand each other to plot rebellion.	<i>Communication was expanded so that people could understand the gospel and respond to the gospel in faith and repentance.</i>
God came to judge and disperse the people into many nations.	<i>God came to bless and disperse a new tribe, the church, to take the gospel of the kingdom to many nations.</i>
God intervened so that people with one language and culture were no longer able to understand each other.	<i>God intervened so that people of different ethnic backgrounds were able to understand each other.</i>

Babel	Pentecost
People sought to make a name for themselves through their own achievement.	<i>People sought to glorify God's name as they talked about his mighty works.</i>
The rebelling Babel resulted in the disintegration of the human family into different races and nationalities.	<i>Pentecost resulted in establishing the church from people of all races and nationalities.</i>
From Babel the people were dispersed over the face of all the earth.	<i>From Jerusalem new believers from every nation under heaven returned to their homes to spread the gospel of Christ.</i>

If you or other participants are using a first-edition copy of *The Promised One*, you will find a question (10) regarding Nimrod and the way in which he foreshadows the work of Antichrist, which has been removed from later editions. The question states that Satan will become incarnate as God became incarnate. And that is incorrect.

While it seems clear the “man of lawlessness” will be a human agent of Satan, it is incorrect to say that Satan will become incarnate as Christ was God incarnate. Rather than just correct the wording, the question has been removed altogether because it is not essential to understanding the Tower of Babel and has the potential to distract from what is essential.



## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. As you read the story of the tower of Babel this week, could you almost picture in your mind a movie version of this scene? Try to if you can. What are the people like? How is this group project progressing? What is God’s tone of voice? What are the scenes like as families are split and dispersed and people can no longer understand each other?

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. What are your thoughts about this picture of people sticking together to build a city in defiance of God and building a tower to get to God on their own terms? What is this about?
3. Looking back at the work you did in the Personal Bible Study, what was especially interesting or challenging to you?

4. There is some humor in this story (whether or not we recognize it) in the way God responded to the tower-building project. There is also judgment and mercy. How do you see humor as well as judgment and mercy here?

*Humor: God belittles their plans by “coming down” to see their tower.*

*Judgment: They will be dispersed and speak different languages.*

*Mercy: They will be dispersed and speak different languages—which will keep them from pursuing independence from God.*

5. Some people have said that the story of the tower of Babel is in the Bible as an explanation of why there are different people groups and languages in the world. Do you think that is why Moses told this story? If not, why do you think Moses included this part of primeval history for his original readers, the chil-

dren of Israel who were preparing to enter the Promised Land?

*We see in it the genealogy of Jesus, a clear picture of God's judgment of sin, the roots of the city that will become Israel's ongoing enemy, and a stark contrast to the way Abraham puts his faith in God to make a name and a nation.*

6. There's nothing inherently wrong in our desires for security and significance, is there? The question is where we will look to have those needs met. How do you think we can distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate ways of having those needs met?

*This is a "how do you think" question, so there is not a particular answer here, but keep in mind the purpose for which we were created: "to enjoy God and glorify him forever."*

## Getting Personal

7. The big question of this week was, "How will you meet your needs for security and significance?" As you look back over your life so far, do you see evidence of trying to secure your own future or make a name for yourself? Would you be willing to share that with the group?

## Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. Throughout this study, we're trying to grasp how some of these familiar stories fit into the bigger story of God's plan for redemption. What part does Genesis 10–11 play in understanding God's story of salvation through the Promised One?

*We feel the ongoing wait for the Promised One, see the genealogy of Jesus, and gain further insight into the sinfulness of humanity that must be cleansed and redeemed. We also are introduced to a spectacular sin through which God will bring glory to himself, when he is one day praised by people of every tongue and tribe and nation.*



Week 6

# Abraham (Genesis 12-15)

## Personal Bible Study

1. Read Genesis 12:1-9. Hebrews 11:8 says, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going." Try to imagine what it must have been like for Abraham, at age seventy-five, to hear the call of God while living in Ur, to leave behind the life he had known and set out, not even knowing what his final destination would be. Why do you think he did it?

*It must have been terribly difficult at Abraham's advanced age to leave everything familiar behind—his culture, his extended family, and his livelihood. But it also had to have been a transforming experience to hear God command him to go. And it had to have been enticing to Abraham to consider the greatness and blessing God promised to him.*

*Since we know that it was "by faith" that Abraham obeyed, and we know that God is the "founder and perfecter" of our faith (Heb. 12:2), then we know that Abraham was empowered to respond to God's call by God's grace.*

2. Abraham traveled the Promised Land from end to end, symbolically taking possession of it for his descendants, lingering at Bethel, Hebron, and later Mount Moriah to build altars, even though the Canaanites were still in the land. In Genesis 12:7-8 we read that "the LORD appeared to Abram" and along with building an altar, Abraham "called upon the name of the LORD," indicating that he and his large entourage publicly proclaimed Yahweh's name in the middle of all the pagan Canaanites. How do Abraham's altar building and calling on the Lord's name reflect a work of grace going on in Abraham's life?

*God had spoken to Abraham in Ur, and Abraham had responded in obedience and faith. Then, when they got to Canaan, God appeared to Abraham. So now his faith was based not only on hearing God but on seeing God. And his response was to worship. The genuine worship in his heart overflowed to worshipping God with his lips. Evidently, as the greatness of God is capturing his heart, this one, whose name God promised to make great, has begun seeking to make the name of Yahweh famous in Canaan.*



3. Throughout these chapters, the Lord repeatedly speaks to Abraham, giving instructions and making promises and then expanding and clarifying those promises. What does God promise, and then how does he expand or clarify it in the following verses?

	<b>God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17</b>
<b>Nation</b>	Gen. 12:2a "I will make of you a great nation." Gen. 17:5 "I have made you the father of a multitude of nations."
<b>Blessing</b>	Gen. 12:2b "I will bless you and make your name great so that you will be a blessing." Gen. 12:3a "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse." Gen. 12:3b "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

	<b>God's promises to Abraham in Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17</b>
<b>Land</b>	Gen. 12:7 <i>"To your offspring I will give this land."</i> Gen. 13:15 <i>"All the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever."</i> Gen. 17:8 <i>"I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession."</i>
<b>Offspring</b>	Gen. 13:16 <i>"I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth."</i> Gen. 15:4 <i>"Your very own son shall be your heir."</i> Gen. 15:5 <i>"Number the stars. . . . So shall your offspring be."</i>

4. All of God's promises to Abraham were fulfilled in physical ways to Abraham and his descendants by birth. But they are also being fulfilled in spiritual ways to Abraham's descendants by faith. And they will be fulfilled in eternal ways when Christ returns and his kingdom is consummated in the new heaven and the new earth. Let's look back to see how God's promises were fulfilled in the Old Testament, how they are being fulfilled in believers today, and what we have to look forward to in these promises being fulfilled into eternity.

Below is a series of verses in biblical order. Write the reference for each passage in the chart that follows, indicating whether the passage reflects a fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham and his descendants physically, spiritually, or eternally. Some fulfillments may have more than one reference, and some references may seem to fit in more than one category. You may even have a box that is left empty. Do not stress over having the "right" answers, but allow this exercise to expand your understanding of how God has fulfilled and will fulfill the promises he made to Abraham.

Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age. (Gen. 21:2)

The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male servants and female servants, camels and donkeys. And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old, and to him he has given all that he has. (Gen. 24:35–36)

Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. (Josh. 21:43)

Who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making for yourself a name for great and awesome things? (1 Chron. 17:21)

You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. (2 Chron. 1:9)

You multiplied their children as the stars of heaven. (Neh. 9:23)

Abraham was the father of Isaac. . . . The father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. (Matt. 1:2, 16)

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. (Rom. 4:13)

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse. (Gal. 3:8–10)

The promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. (Gal. 3:16)

If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal. 3:29)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. (Eph. 1:3)

They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. . . . He has prepared for them a city. (Heb. 11:16)

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession. (1 Pet. 2:9)

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits

on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" (Rev. 5:13)

A great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne . . . (Rev. 7:9)

All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed. (Rev. 15:4)

God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. (Rev. 16:19)

	<b>Physical Fulfillment to Abraham and His Descendants by Birth</b>	<b>Spiritual Fulfillment through Christ to Abraham's Descendants by Faith</b>	<b>Eternal Fulfillment to Come in the Consummation</b>
<b>Nation</b>	1 Chronicles 17:21	1 Peter 2:9	Revelation 15:4
<b>Blessing</b>	Genesis 24:35–36	Ephesians 1:3 Galatians 3:8–10	Revelation 5:13 Revelation 16:19
<b>Land</b>	Joshua 21:43	Romans 4:13	Hebrews 11:16
<b>Offspring</b>	2 Chronicles 1:9 Genesis 21:2 Nehemiah 9:23	Matthew 1:2, 16 Galatians 3:16 Galatians 3:29	Revelation 7:9



5. Though Abraham made a great start in the life of faith, he stumbled significantly (Gen. 12:10–20). How does his going to Egypt and his deceit there reflect a lack of faith, and what were the consequences?

*Abraham did the natural thing when he went to Egypt during the famine, but there is no indication that he sought to hear from God on the matter, the one who had told him to go to the land of Canaan, the one who had the power to provide for him. Telling the Pharaoh a half-truth about Sarah's being his sister revealed a lack of faith, assuming he had to be deceitful to protect God's plan rather than trusting God to bring about his plan.*

*Rather than being a blessing to Egypt, Abraham's deceit brought plagues on Pharaoh and his family. Abraham brought dishonor to the name of Yahweh rather than honor.*

*The wealth Abraham brought out of Egypt ended up becoming a source of strife between Abraham and Lot in the years to come. And it is likely that Hagar, who will be the focus of more trouble for Abraham later, was among the servants given to Abraham by Pharaoh.*

6. Read Genesis 13. Despite the fact that Abraham descended to self-serving deception in Egypt, he was still a man of faith. Like us, he was a mix of self-centered reliance and trust in God. How are his actions in chapter 13 a contrast to his lack of faith and deception in chapter 12?

*Abraham went back to Bethel where God had appeared to him before, and he worshiped and called on God there. This was not just a return to land but to God. Rather than actions of self-protection, Abraham opened himself to being taken advantage of by his nephew Lot, trusting*

God to provide for him. Here he reveals that he lives out faith that God will give the land to his offspring as he promised and that even if he gives it away, it will come back to his descendants. Rather than fleeing to the world to provide for his needs, Abraham separated himself from the world, whereas Lot made himself at home in it. Abraham walked through the length and breadth of the land, a symbolic act signifying legal acquisition of the land.

7. Read Genesis 14. Lot chose to make his home near Sodom, and when he and his family were carted away by a cadre of kings who ravaged Sodom, Abraham could easily have responded in apathy, seeing it as Lot's getting what he deserved based on the choice he made. But instead, the herdsman Abraham became General Abraham, taking 318 men and defeating those who had taken Lot and bringing back all the possessions taken from Sodom along with Lot and Lot's family. Earlier Abraham was tested by want in the famine and failed, and here he was tested by success. What do verses 17–24 reveal about how Abraham responded to this test?

*Abraham honored God by giving a tenth of his wealth to Melchizedek, who was a Canaanite believer in Abraham's God, a non-Jewish priest-king of Jerusalem. Abraham likewise refused to be enriched by the king of Sodom, choosing instead to fully rely on God to provide for him.*

8. When we begin reading Genesis 15, we see that it begins with "After these things," so we know that what is about to happen is related to what has just happened in Genesis 14. Abraham had just rejected what anyone around him would have said was a very good deal. The king of Sodom offered to divide with Abraham everything recovered from the defeated kingdoms, which would have made Abraham incredibly rich. The agreement would also have created an alliance that would have provided Abraham with some protection, should those kings want to take revenge. How does this shed light on what God promised and why in Genesis 15:1?

God told Abraham, "I am your shield," meaning, "You didn't lose any protection by not relying on the King of Sodom. I will be your protection."

God told Abraham, "Your reward shall be very great," meaning, "You didn't lose anything of value when you declined to divide the booty with the king of Sodom. I will reward you."

9. God was revealing himself to Abraham here in a new way and inviting Abraham to trust him in a new way. Putting your own name in place of Abraham's name, what would it mean to you personally to hear God say to you in your own situation and circumstance, "Fear not, —, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great" (Gen. 15:1)?

*Personal response*

10. Genesis 15:6 is quoted in three New Testament passages (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; and James 2:23). What does Paul's discussion of this verse in Romans 4 add to our understanding of the relationship between believing God and righteousness?

- ☞ Romans 4:4–5: *This righteousness was not earned wages, but a gift.*
- ☞ Romans 4:10: *He was not made righteous through circumcision, because this was counted to him before he was circumcised.*
- ☞ Romans 4:20–22: *He believed God = "fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised."*
- ☞ Romans 4:23–24: *We receive this righteousness the same way Abraham did—by believing God.*

11. Read Genesis 15:7–21. Today, if you are in court and swear to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," you confirm your oath by placing your hand on a Bible. In the office of a notary public, you may be asked to confirm an oath by raising your hand. In Abraham's day, an oath was confirmed by a ceremony in which animals were cut into two parts along the backbone and placed in two rows facing each other across a space marked off between

them. The two parties to the oath walked together into the space between the parts and spoke their promises there, thereby pledging that if they did not fulfill their oath, they would be cut in two like the animals. When God “cut a covenant” with Abraham, why was it only God, manifested in the form of a smoking firepot and blazing torch, and not Abraham also, who passed through the pieces?

*God made a promise to Abraham in grace, and this covenant did not have stipulations for what Abraham had to do to retain God’s favor. God alone undertook to fulfill this covenant and grant Abraham this blessing. Of Abraham he required nothing; of himself he undertook to accomplish everything, recognizing that it will require his death.*

12. In Genesis 15:12–16, God explains how, when, and why the land would be given to Abraham’s descendants. This divine preview of history with its precise predictions and explicit

dating taught Abraham that God is sovereign in history. According to the following verses, for what purposes did God postpone the time when Abraham’s descendants would take possession of the land?

- *Genesis 15:13 fulfilled in Exodus 1:11: The Israelites would be afflicted, learning that suffering precedes glory.*
- *Genesis 15:14 fulfilled in Exodus 11:12 and 12:36: The Israelites would come out of Egypt great in number and with great possessions taken from the Egyptians.*
- *Genesis 15:15 fulfilled in Genesis 25:8: Abraham would not take possession of the Promised Land, but he died at peace knowing that a heavenly homeland was his.*
- *Genesis 15:16 fulfilled in Numbers 21:24–25: During the time the Israelites were in captivity, the sin of the Amorites who lived in Canaan would increase so that Israel’s invasion under Joshua would be an act of justice rather than aggression. In this way, the displacement of the Amorites by Israel was not simply the result of divine favoritism but just punishment for flaunting God’s moral law.*

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## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. Probably most of you fit into one of two camps: either you still live near the family you grew up with, or at some point you moved away and started a new life and family of your own, like Abraham did. What do you see as the upsides and downsides of each?

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. Perhaps you have grown up seeing Abraham as a “hero” of faith. How does what we’ve read about Abraham so far in Genesis 12–15 build an argument for or against that idea?

*There is evidence of both here (which affirms to us that Abraham is a real person just like us, because we are sometimes faithful and sometimes faithless). Abraham evidences faith by leaving Ur, but he does not leave all of his family behind. He goes, but he leaves Canaan to go to*

*Egypt, not trusting God to provide for him. He gives into fear by telling Pharaoh that Sarah is his sister rather than his wife. He showed faith that God would provide for him by refusing the booty of war from the king of Sodom.*

3. What question from the Personal Bible Study was especially interesting or meaningful or maybe challenging to you?

4. Evidently Abraham understood what so many people throughout history, and so many of us today, simply have not understood clearly about the nature of God’s promises. We become so focused on God’s fulfilling his promises in the here and now, in physical ways we can see and feel and enjoy in this life. In the process we diminish and discount the spiritual and eternal nature of God’s promises. Often the spiritual and eternal nature of God’s promises seem to us to be somehow less-than, even a copout on God’s really delivering on his promises. How has tracing the

various ways God has fulfilled, is fulfilling, and will fulfill his promises to Abraham helped you in understanding and perhaps accepting how God has fulfilled, is fulfilling, and will fulfill his promises to you?

*If group members are struggling with this, you may need to go back to the Personal Bible Study question on page 146 and talk through some of those answers.*

5. How is Genesis 15:1–6 a model for us in dealing with fear and doubt?

*Abraham openly expressed his question and doubt to God rather than running away from him because of his doubt. And then he listened to God's word and chose to believe God's word. We need to listen to God by reading his Word, pour out our doubts to him in prayer, and choose to rest in his promises to us, believing they will be enough for us.*

6. We saw that Abraham was not declared righteous until his believing God's promise related specifically to the promised offspring, the one who would bring salvation. What significance does this have for us in regard to faith? How is this different from merely having spiritual beliefs or a belief that there is a God or that Jesus was a great moral teacher?

*This is one of the most important truths in this study and something that is commonly misunderstood and might easily be missed. So don't let your group miss it! The question is: "How were Old Testament believers saved?" And the most common options assumed are:*

- 1) *They were saved by obeying the law.*
- 2) *They were saved by offering sacrifices.*
- 3) *They were saved by a general faith in God.*
- 4) *They were saved by faith in the Messiah.*

*As David Murray writes, unless we consistently answer #4, we end up portraying heaven as populated not only by lovers of Christ, but also by legalists, ritualists, and mere theists who never knew Christ until they got there. Understanding how Old Testament saints were saved is an important truth to grasp and nurture, as it helps us to be very clear on how we are saved, because we are saved the same way: by grace through faith in Christ. While we have the benefit of knowing Christ's name—Jesus—and when he came and how he saved us through the cross—*

*benefits that Old Testament believers did not have—we are made righteous and therefore justified in the same way they were: solely through putting our faith in Jesus Christ.*

7. What difference does it make that Abraham's believing God was not a good work through which he earned the righteousness that was credited to him, but rather his believing God was the channel through which the righteousness of Christ was credited to him?

*The Bible makes clear that no one is made right with God by good works, but only by faith in the saving work of Christ. If we think that Abraham's believing was a good work credited to his account, that diminishes the sufficiency of the work of Christ by seeking to add human work to his work. If we think this is what made Abraham right with God, we can more easily slip into the error of thinking we must work up faith in ourselves to earn acceptance with God rather than relying on God to give us the faith to trust him so that we can receive the righteousness of Christ transferred to our spiritual account.*

8. The heart of these chapters of Genesis is the grace of God coming to a pagan idol worshiper and making promises to a man who, in response, embraced the grace given to him. How do you see that in these chapters, and how does it challenge you or move you?

9. Many people in our world today see God as a harsh judge, an arbitrary power, an uncaring deity. What does the covenant oath ceremony, as unusual as it is, reveal to us about the person of God?

*We see a God who initiates, provides, understands our weakness, gives, and always planned to offer his own Son as a sacrifice, well aware of the cost of showing us great mercy.*

## Getting Personal

10. The big question of this week was, "Is there a day you are longing for?" We were challenged to nurture our longing for the day when Christ will return, and all the promises made to Abraham

and his descendants will be fulfilled for eternity. Is that a day you long for? Why or why not? How can we nurture that longing?

### **Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture**

11. Throughout this study, we're trying to grasp how some of these familiar stories fit into the bigger story of God's plan for redemption. The Bible doesn't begin with Abraham's story in Genesis 12; Abraham's story is part of God's story of redemption after the fall of Genesis 3. How

does it fit into the bigger story? How does understanding the bigger story help us to put God's promises to Old Testament descendants of Abraham in proper perspective?

*Ever since the fall in Genesis 3, Genesis has been tracing God's outworking of his plan to send the promised offspring. This will not be a random person or birth. God is preparing a people, a nation, and even a place, where he will enfold himself into a virgin's womb and become human. But without an understanding from Genesis 1-3 about the fall of man, and the need for a savior/deliverer, the calling and blessing of Abraham make little sense.*

Week 7

# Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 16-24)

## Personal Bible Study

1. Read Genesis 16, and summarize in a couple of sentences what takes place.

*Though God had clearly promised Abraham he would have a son to be his heir, he and Sarah were impatient, and after ten years of living in Canaan, capitulated to a custom that was common in the cultures around them—Abraham had a child with Sarah’s servant, Hagar. This created bitter conflict between Hagar and Sarah and Hagar fled. But God met Hagar in the desert and made promises about her son and sent her back to Sarah.*

2. Egypt plays a prominent part in Abraham’s story. In Genesis 12 there was a famine, and Abraham’s solution was to go to Egypt, where he succumbed to fear that led to great sin in telling Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister. In Genesis 13 the land chosen by Lot is described as being “well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt” (v. 10). Now, in Genesis 16, we meet Hagar, an Egyptian who, not surprisingly, was fruitful while Sarah was barren. Why would this repeated theme of the dangers of the allures of Egypt be significant to the original readers, the Israelites, for whom

Moses wrote Genesis, as they prepared to enter the Promised Land?

*Those who had just been delivered from Egypt were repeatedly tempted to return to Egypt. They got tired of manna and missed the spicy foods of Egypt (Numbers 11). When the spies came back from visiting the Promised Land with a discouraging report, their first response was to go back to Egypt (Numbers 13). And when there was no water to drink, they complained to Moses that he had brought them out of Egypt to die in the desert. Moses wanted to show the Israelites that though Egypt may appear to offer ease and abundance, it is really only a snare. Real freedom and abundance are found only in the Promised Land of God’s presence.*

3. The covenant is stated in its most basic form in Genesis 17:7–8. What is it?

*I will be your God, and you will be my people.*

4. As part of this covenant, God changed the name Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah. What is implied by God’s changing their names?

*It was a demonstration of control and a constant reminder that they were not their own but belonged to God. Their new names also emphasized what God was going to accomplish in their lives by his power.*

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5. On the day of Pentecost, which is the birthday of the New Testament church, Peter encouraged the people to “repent and be baptized.” Compare Acts 2:38–39 with Genesis 17:7. What similarities and what differences do you see? Write down your discoveries in the chart below.

Similarities	Differences
<i>Similar to God’s command to Abraham to walk before him and be blameless, Peter told the people to repent.</i>	<i>Forgiveness of sin was offered because Jesus took the penalty of the sign of circumcision on himself—he was cut off from God so we can be forgiven.</i>



Similarities	Differences
<i>This was a sign of a covenant between God and his people.</i>	<i>Believers are marked by the gift of the Holy Spirit rather than being marked physically.</i>
<i>It was for those who believed and for their children.</i>	<i>The promises were extended beyond the descendants of Abraham to “all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”</i>

6. Paul connects circumcision to baptism in Colossians 2:11–14. How do they relate, according to these verses?

*When we turn to Christ in faith and repentance, we undergo a spiritual rather than a physical “circumcision”—our sinful nature is cut away. Through baptism we identify ourselves with Christ, putting our faith in the mighty power of God to raise us to new life just as Christ was raised from the dead.*

7. Read Genesis 18:1–15. Abraham’s guests were the Lord (Yahweh) and two angels. But Abraham had no idea of this, at least at first. How does what Abraham’s visitors say in verses 9–10 make it obvious to Abraham that his visitors were not ordinary men?

*The Lord called Sarai by her covenant name, Sarah, and repeated almost word for word the announcement God had given to Abraham earlier (17:21), that Sarah will have a child “at this time next year.”*

8. Earlier Abraham laughed when God said he would have a son, and God did not rebuke him (17:17–22). But when Sarah laughed to herself, God rebuked her (18:12–13). What was different about the spirit behind their laughter?

*Abraham was on his face before God, believing God but finding it funny that God was going to give them a baby in their old age. Sarah’s laughter seems to come from disbelief and cynicism about God’s promise.*

9. Read Genesis 21:1–14 along with Galatians 4:21–31. Paul writes to those in the Galatians church, “Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise (Gal. 4:28). What does it mean to be a child of promise?

*The same miracle that was required for Isaac to be born is needed for us to be born again. We come into the family of God not by human birth or effort but by grace through faith in God’s promise.*

10. Read Genesis 22:1–19. List a few adjectives you would use to describe Abraham’s obedience in this testing by God.

*Willing, quick, complete, thoughtful, tearful, faithful, confident, worshipful, costly*

11. Moses, the narrator, tells us upfront that Abraham was being tested, but Abraham didn’t know that. When God tests us, his purpose is always for our good (as opposed to Satan’s purposes in tempting us, which are meant to harm). How do you think Abraham’s faith was strengthened by this test?

*While Abraham had often failed when his faith had been tested before, he had no cause for shame after this test—only joy. He must have been strengthened in his conviction that God can be trusted. He must have found joy in knowing that his faith was proven to be genuine, that his trust was in God alone, and that he was not merely using God to get the blessings God had promised. This experience must have increased his understanding of and dependence upon what God would one day do—offer his own Son as a human sacrifice for sin.*

12. How do Abraham and Isaac point to God the Father and Jesus the Son? Note your answers in the chart below.

Abraham and Isaac	God the Father, Jesus the Son
<p>“Your very own son shall be your heir.” (Gen. 15:4)            “I will give you a son by her.” (Gen. 17:16)</p>	<p>Gen. 3:15; Luke 1:72–73  <i>Just as Isaac was promised by God repeatedly, long before he was born, so Jesus was promised by God repeatedly through the prophets, long before his birth.</i></p>
<p>“You shall call his name Isaac.” (Gen. 17:19)</p>	<p>Matt. 1:21  <i>Just as God told Abraham what to name his son, so did God tell Joseph what to name his son.</i></p>
<p>“Sarai was barren.” (Gen. 11:30)            “The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah.” (Gen. 18:11)</p>	<p>Luke 1:34  <i>Just as it was physically impossible for Sarah to conceive the child God promised, Isaac, so was it physically impossible for Mary to conceive the child God promised, Jesus.</i></p>
<p>“The LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh and say, “Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?” Is anything too hard for the LORD?’” (Gen. 18:13–14)</p>	<p>Luke 1:34  <i>Just as Isaac’s mother asked how she could have a child and was told, “Is anything too hard for the LORD?” so Jesus’s mother asked, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” and was told, “For nothing will be impossible with God.”</i></p>
<p>“Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.” (Gen. 21:2)</p>	<p>Gal. 4:4  <i>Just as God set the time when Sarah would give birth to the promised son Isaac, so did God set the time when Jesus the promised Son would be born of a woman.</i></p>
<p>“He said, ‘Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and . . . offer him there as a burnt offering.’” (Gen. 22:2)</p>	<p>Matt. 17:5; John 3:16  <i>God gave his only Son, Jesus, the Son whom he loved, as a sacrifice for sin.</i></p>
<p>“So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him. . . . And he cut the wood for the burnt offering.” (Gen. 22:3)</p>	<p>Acts 2:23  <i>Just as Abraham made preparations for offering his son as a sacrifice, so “Jesus [was] delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.”</i></p>
<p>“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son.” (Gen. 22:6)</p>	<p>John 19:17  <i>Just as Isaac carried the wood upon which he would be laid as a sacrifice, so Jesus carried the cross upon which he would be lifted up as a sacrifice.</i></p>
<p>“Abram gave all he had to Isaac.” (Gen. 25:5)</p>	<p>John 3:35  <i>“The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.”</i></p>

13. While there are a number of ways that Abraham offering up Isaac as a sacrifice points to God offering his Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice, there are key contrasts. Note in the chart below those you find from the passages given.

<p>“But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham! . . . Do not lay your hand on the boy.’” (Gen. 22:11–12)</p>	<p>Matt. 26:53; Rom. 8:32  <i>While the angel called out to Abraham so that his son was spared, Jesus refused to call out to angels for protection, and his Father did not spare him but gave him up.</i></p>
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## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. What are some of the most meaningful ways your spouse (or a family member or friend, if you are not married) instills confidence that you are loved?

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. Abraham is known as the father of faith. But we've also seen last week and this week that he was a real person whose faith sometimes failed. In what ways did Abraham exhibit faith, and in what ways did he fail to trust God?

*Lack of faith: He had a child with Hagar rather than trusting God to give him a child through Sarah. Again, Abraham lied to King Abimelech about Sarah being his wife.*

*Sign of faith: Abraham took the sign of the covenant (circumcision) upon himself and his household. He interceded with God for Lot's safety. Abraham showed faith by sending Ishmael away and by preparing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice.*

3. How does the sign of circumcision speak of both blessing and cursing? And how does Christ fulfill both the blessing and the cursing of this covenant sign?

*The removal of the foreskin represents the removal of sin and consecration to the Lord, an outward sign of an inward reality, a true spiritual blessing. The cutting off was also a sign of the curse that comes to those who take the sign but do not believe the promise. In this case, circumcision is a graphic picture of an unbeliever being cut off from the people of God.*

*Christ fulfilled the cleansing aspect of the sign of circumcision by providing the cleansing from sin it always pointed to. And Christ fulfilled the curse aspect of this sign by becoming a curse on the cross for the disobedience of the elect, being "cut off" in our place.*

4. How would you explain the connection between circumcision in the Old Testament and baptism in the New Testament?

*See pages 178–79 in The Promised One*

5. When the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, he shared a meal with Abraham. What does this suggest about the kind of covenant relationship God wants to have with his people?

*An intimate, personal relationship.*

6. Laughter is a big part of these chapters—Abraham's laughter, Sarah's laughter on two different occasions, and Ishmael's laughter, as well as the name given to Isaac, which means "he laughs." What is the difference between some of these instances of laughter? Why do you think this idea of laughter is repeated in this story?

*Perhaps God wants us to see this story through the somewhat humorous way in which he brought about his purposes in the lives of his people. It was laughably ridiculous to think that Abraham and Sarah would have a child, and yet God got the last laugh. Surely this laughter expresses the joy of God in his work among his own and the pleasure he takes in accomplishing his purposes.*

7. Some people are offended that God would test Abraham by telling him to sacrifice his son, even though God never intended for Abraham to kill Isaac. Why do you think God chose to test Abraham in this way?

*If we understand that all of the Scriptures are about Christ, then we must say that God was preparing his people to grasp what he would do when he would offer up his beloved Son as a sacrifice.*

8. Looking back at your list of the ways Abraham and his son Isaac point to God the Father and his Son, Jesus, which one is especially meaningful to you?

9. If you were a Jewish person living at the time of Christ's crucifixion, how would reflecting on the story of Abraham being called to offer Isaac as a sacrifice help you to make sense of Christ's death on the cross?

*You would see that the death of Jesus was not the result of the rejection and cruelty of humans apart from God's control but was the plan God had from before the foun-*

*dations of the world, pictured centuries before in Abraham's offering up Isaac. Their horror at what Abraham was asked to do but did not have to do would turn into understanding of what God did do in offering up his Son.*

### **Getting Personal**

10. The big question of this week was, "How will you know that you are loved by God?" Did you grow up believing that God loves you, or did that become clear to you at some point later on? Do you ever doubt God's love for you? Why or when?

### **Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture**

11. Throughout this study, we're trying to grasp how each section in Genesis fits into the bigger story of God's plan for redemption. How would everything about the Bible be different if God had not given Abraham and Sarah a son?

*There would be no particular people of God preserved to be the family from which the Promised One would come.*

Week 8

# Jacob (Genesis 25:19–35:21)

## Personal Bible Study

If you've never read Jacob's story, or if you only know bits and pieces of it, consider reading all of Genesis 25:19–35:29 (skipping chapter 26) as you work through the questions below. Otherwise, you can read only the sections indicated.

1. Read Genesis 25:19–34 and Genesis 27. God told Rebekah what his plan was for her children (Gen. 25:22–23). What was it?

*Two nations will be formed by the descendants of these two boys between which there will be ongoing conflict. Though it might be expected that the younger son and his descendants would be secondary to the older brother and his descendants, it will be the opposite. The promised offspring will come from the line of the younger son, and the descendants of the older son will be blessed by him too.*

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2. How did each person in Isaac's family fail in response to this clearly revealed plan of God for the Promised One to come through Jacob instead of through the firstborn, Esau? Note your answers in the chart below.

Isaac (Gen. 25:23, 28; 27:1–4)	<i>Isaac ignored what God told Rebekah. He preferred Esau to Jacob and sought to give Esau the blessing of the firstborn in secret, evidently assuming he could defy the plan of God. Isaac should have remembered that he, the younger brother of Ishmael, was the son of promise because of God's choice.</i>
Rebekah (Gen. 25:28; 27:5–17, 42–46)	<i>Rebekah showed favoritism to Jacob and wanted him to have the blessing of the firstborn, but rather than trust God to accomplish his plan, she developed her own deceitful plan to get this blessing for Jacob.</i>
Jacob (Gen. 25:29–34; 27:11–27)	<i>Jacob appeared to have premeditated his exploitation of Esau's hunger to grab the birthright for himself. Rather than trust God to provide what he had promised, he alienated and infuriated his brother to get it. Then he lied and even used God's name to deceive his father to grab the blessing of the firstborn.</i>
Esau (Gen. 25:29–34; 27:34, 38, 41)	<i>Esau did not value the promise or plan of God. He was dismissive and indifferent to it. Esau completely disregarded God's plan for him to serve his younger brother.</i>

3. Read Genesis 28:10–22. While Jacob grew up hearing about God from his parents and grandparents, his first real experience with the God of his fathers occurred in a place he named Bethel, which means “house of God.” List six promises God made to Jacob through his dream at Bethel (vv. 13–15):

- 1) *I will give to you and your offspring the land on which you lie.*
- 2) *Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth (abundant and spreading all over the earth).*
- 3) *All the families of the earth will be blessed in you and your offspring.*
- 4) *I am with you and will keep you wherever you go*
- 5) *I will bring you back to this land*
- 6) *I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*

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4. Some see Jacob’s response to God’s promises as a good start, but still lacking. What positive signs do you see, and in what ways does Jacob need to grow, according to Genesis 28:16–22? Note your answers in the chart.

<b>Signs That Jacob Is Beginning to Change</b>	<b>Signs of Jacob’s Need for Further Growth</b>
Gen. 28:16–17 <i>He is aware of God’s presence and in awe of this place where God has visited him.</i>	<i>He seems to think it is perhaps more about a holy place than an awesome God.</i>
Gen. 28:18 <i>Jacob commemorates this special event by pouring oil on the stone.</i>	<i>He does not build an altar, and there is no evidence of genuine worship.</i>
Gen. 28: 20–21 <i>Jacob makes a vow to God.</i>	<i>Jacob’s vow seems to be a bit of bargaining—“God, if you will do this, then I will make you my God.” It is also very self-centered rather than God-centered. Rather than appealing directly to what God has promised to give him, he seems to set some of his own terms of what he wants from God as well as what he will do for God.</i>
Gen. 28:22 <i>Jacob states his intention to build a house for God, and instead of grabbing from God, Jacob makes a vow to give to God.</i>	<i>What God wants most from Jacob is his heart and his trust, and Jacob still seems to doubt God’s promises.</i>

5. God’s love was extended to this unlovely sinner at Bethel as he promised great things to Jacob, not because of the kind of person Jacob was but in spite of the person he was. The same love worked in Jacob’s heart through many painful experiences over the next twenty years to make him more than he once was. While Moses provides us with a generous record of events and development in Jacob’s life, we will not be able to cover it all in the Teaching Chapter to follow, such as Jacob’s experience with Laban and his marriages to Rachel and Leah (29:1–31:55). Read Genesis 29–31 with an eye toward how Jacob is still a work in progress even as God is

at work in his life as evidenced in his response to various difficulties. In this account of Jacob’s twenty years in Haran working for Laban, what indicates that Jacob is still a work in progress and that God is at work to change him even though Jacob still has a way to go to be all that God intends for him to be?

- ☞ *Jacob was willing to work an additional seven years to marry Rachel even after being tricked and deceived into marrying Leah. (29:20–30)*
- ☞ *When Rachel demanded a child, Jacob, like his grandfather, had a child with her maidservant and unlike his father he did not pray for his wife to conceive. (30:1–4)*
- ☞ *Jacob dealt with Laban in integrity even though Laban had cheated him, and he cared for his flocks*

beyond what was expected even though Laban took advantage of him. (30:31–36)

- ☞ Jacob recognized that his abundance of livestock came not through his own ingenuity or stealth but because God provided it. (30:37–43)
- ☞ Jacob recognized God's protection, provision, and presence with him. (31:38–42)

6. Read Genesis 32:1–12. As Jacob prepared to see his brother Esau, not knowing if Esau would accept him or kill him, we witness Jacob not only making a plan but, for the first time in Moses's account of his life, bowing to pray. What does Jacob's prayer (32:9–12) reveal about how God is at work in his life?

*Jacob stated that he is walking in obedience to God's command to go back to his country. He exhibited humility in acknowledging that he is not worthy of all the love and faithfulness God has extended to him. He confessed his fear of Esau and his need for God's deliverance. He appealed to God on the basis of God's promise to him.*

7. Read Genesis 32:22–31. In the dark, Jacob cannot tell who his adversary is. In the beginning he is identified as a man, but by the time their contest ends, Jacob has become convinced that his opponent is God himself. According to the following verses, what leads Jacob to believe that he is actually wrestling against God, and how do we know this is who Jacob thinks he has wrestled with?

- ☞ Genesis 32:25: *This "man" was strong enough to dislocate Jacob's hip with a "touch."*
- ☞ Genesis 32:26: *He wants to leave before daylight, and Jacob knows that no one can see the face of God and live.*
- ☞ Genesis 32:28: *"You have striven with God."*
- ☞ Genesis 32:30: *Jacob named the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face."*

8. The touch of God to Jacob's hip brought a great deal of physical pain and left Jacob with a permanent limp. Why do you think God did this, and what do we learn from this?

*Jacob had been depending on his own strength to come out on top his whole life. This experience reduced Jacob to a sense of nothingness. It taught him that real strength*

*flows out of weakness before God. Brought to the end of his own resources, Jacob could only cling to God and seek his blessing.*

*To enjoy the blessing of God, we have to come to the end of ourselves. What hinders us most in our growth in grace is not so much our spiritual weakness but our ongoing confidence in our natural strength.*

9. Genesis 32:28 says that Jacob has "striven with God and with men," and has "prevailed" or "won." Does the picture of Jacob limping away from this wrestling match seem like "prevailing" to you? Why might God say that Jacob has prevailed?

*Jacob had contended successfully with Esau, with his father, and with Laban, yet by winning he ultimately lost. But with God, Jacob won by losing.*

*No doubt Jacob would describe this as the night he became a cripple. Yet Jacob prevailed in that his lifelong struggle against allowing the God of his fathers to rule and guide his life at last came to an end, and so, in that sense, it was a night of great victory for Jacob. "I will not let you go unless you bless me" was finally the cry of faith.*

10. Think back to when Adam was instructed to name the animals, when Adam named Eve, and also about how God changed the name Abram to Abraham (Gen. 17:3–5) and Sarai to Sarah (Gen. 17:15–16). What is the significance of God giving Jacob the new name of "Israel" (32:28)?

*Naming indicates authority over, so by giving Jacob a new name, God asserted authority in Jacob's life and recognized Jacob's new submission to that authority. His new name also indicated a profound change and the beginning of a new life of faith. Jacob would no longer be defined by and identified by his natural self—as a trickster, deceiver, grabber. He would then be identified and defined by his relationship to God. God was at work in his life remaking him into a man who lives by faith.*

11. Read John 1:43–51. How does Jesus compare Nathanael to Jacob/Israel?

*We don't know what Nathanael was doing or thinking about or praying when he sat under the fig tree, but obviously Jesus knew, and that convinced Nathanael that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus was saying that Na-*

*thanael was not a trickster or deceiver like Jacob once was, but that he was being changed by God as Jacob had been. He was a “true Israelite”—one who lives under the authority of God.*

12. How does Jesus compare himself to the stairway that Jacob saw in his dream?

*Jesus was saying that God is no longer at Bethel, the old “house of God” where God revealed himself to Jacob. God*

*has come down in the flesh. Jesus himself is the stairway that brings heaven to earth. Jesus descended from heaven to become flesh. He was lifted up on the cross of Calvary. He descended into death and rose from the dead. He ascended to heaven where he sits at the right hand of God. And he will descend again to set up his kingdom on a redeemed earth. He will bring heaven to earth for good.*

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## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. Take a minute to imagine the day-to-day reality of living in the home of Isaac and Rebekah along with Jacob and Esau. What do they talk about around the dinner table, and what topics do they avoid? What are the nagging issues and unresolved hurts? What is it like when Esau brings his Hittite wives home and after Jacob leaves home?

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. Jacob’s life was marked by struggle even before he was born, and throughout his life we see him struggle. How was Jacob’s whole life really a struggle with God to see who was in control?

3. God said that Jacob struggled with men and with God and “prevailed” or “won.” In what way(s) did Jacob “win” in his struggle with God?

4. Over and over again in Genesis we are seeing that God does not choose whom he will use based on human custom or personal virtue. Why do you think that is, and on what does he base his choice? (Verses to consult include Rom. 9:6–16; Eph. 1:3–4, 11–12; 2 Tim. 1:9).

*God intends to receive the glory by working through weakness rather than strength, doing the impossible rather than the expected.*

5. Many people talk about wrestling with God, when they’re really talking about rebelling against God or resisting God. We notice that it is God who initiated the wrestling match with Jacob, and it was certainly purposeful. How would you explain God’s purpose in dealing with Jacob in this way, and how is this vastly different from the way we might talk about our struggling with God’s ways, God’s Word, or God’s plans as “wrestling with God”?

6. According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 35), sanctification is “the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.” How does Jacob picture for us the process of sanctification in the life of a believer?

*We see the persevering grace of God at work in Jacob’s life transforming his character and ways. The more Jacob prays, receives God’s word, and seeks after God himself, the more he is marked by godliness rather than his old ways of the flesh.*

### Getting Personal

7. This week we observed Jacob, who spent much of his life interested in getting God’s blessings but not really that interested in knowing God himself or having the blessing of intimate relationship with God. In our consumerist culture it comes naturally to approach God looking for



what we can get from him rather than seeking how we can get more of him. Can you see this in your own life, and would you be willing to share how God has been at work in you to help you to value him more than just his blessings?

### **Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture**

8. Throughout this study, we're trying to grasp how some of these familiar stories fit into the bigger story of God's plan for redemption. How

do we see God continuing and protecting his plan through Jacob's life for the promised offspring?

*Jacob is the second-born son and yet is chosen to be in the line of the Promised One, which God brings about despite Jacob's bad choices. Though Jacob leaves the Land of Promise, he returns to it to hear God reaffirm his promises to him. God gives him twelve sons who will become the heads of the twelve tribes.*

## Week 9

# Joseph (Genesis 37–50)

### Personal Bible Study

1. Read Genesis 37:1–11. What three reasons do you find in these verses for Joseph's brothers' hatred and jealousy toward him?

- ☞ Genesis 37:2: *Joseph brought back a bad report about their behavior after being out in the fields with them.*
- ☞ Genesis 37:4: *Their father loved Joseph more than all of them, which likely showed itself in the work assignments, meal seating, provision, and attention, not to mention the robe that indicated he would be the leader of the family.*
- ☞ Genesis 37:5–11: *Joseph told them about a dream he had in which it was obvious that he expected he would rule over them and they would bow down to him.*

2. Read Genesis 37:12–36. In what ways do Joseph's brothers show great callousness and cruelty?

*They mocked him by called him "this dreamer" and conspired with each other to kill him. They were callous toward their father by planning to kill his beloved son and lie to him about how it happened. They were physically brutal to Joseph, stripping him of his clothes and throwing him into the pit, and they were callous to sit down to eat while ignoring his cries for help. Judah may have been motivated by compassion or he may have been motivated only by greed when he suggested selling Joseph to Midianite traders instead of killing him. They showed great callousness to their father as they watched him weep and mourn, not telling him that Joseph was really alive.*

3. Read Genesis 39:1–23. Although God never spoke directly to Joseph as he had done to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we read eight times in this chapter that "the LORD" (using the personal covenant name for God) was with Joseph. Why

might the narrator want to assure us that God was with Joseph in such a personal way?

*Because we might assume that God had abandoned Joseph, thinking that God would not have allowed Joseph to suffer in this way if he was with Joseph. The narrator wants us to know that far from abandoning Joseph, God was actively at work in and through his life. He was at work granting Joseph favor in his master's sight, blessing his master's household for his sake, and instilling in Joseph a great fear of God and strength of character so that he could withstand tremendous, relentless temptation.*

*Because we might assume that Joseph should have been rewarded and blessed for his stand against temptation rather than punished for it, the narrator specifically tells us that the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love in prison.*

4. Read Genesis 40:1–22. How must it have encouraged Joseph when his interpretations of the dreams of the chief baker and chief cupbearer proved true?

*Joseph was still holding on in faith that his dreams of his family would one day come true. So when he also recognized that these two prisoners' dreams were from God, he interpreted them. When those interpretations came true, it must have encouraged him that he was not foolish to continue to believe that God would indeed bring his dreams to pass, even after eleven years of no signs of their coming true.*

5. Read Genesis 41:1–45. How does it become obvious in this chapter that the Lord truly has been with Joseph?

*In God's providence, Joseph was put in prison with someone who would end up having the Pharaoh's ear to suggest that Joseph could interpret Pharaoh's troubling dream. Then Joseph boldly stood before the Pharaoh who claimed to be a god and told him that the one true God*

would not only provide the meaning of his dream, but God would bring it about, that it was “fixed by God” (v. 32). God also gave Joseph great wisdom to know what plan to suggest and great ability to carry out that wise plan. Only God could have lifted him from the lowest place of being an imprisoned foreign slave to riding in a chariot in Egypt, second in command to Pharaoh, in a single day.

6. Read Genesis 41: 46–56. Note the names Joseph gave to his two sons born in Egypt. What do they reveal about how God has worked in him throughout his years of slavery and imprisonment?

- ☞ Manasseh: “God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father’s house.” God had been at work in Joseph’s heart, giving him hope for the future rather than an obsession about his past hurts.
- ☞ Ephraim: “For God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.” God had been at work in Joseph’s life, generating the fruit of forgiveness and faith. And he had been at work through his life, making him a blessing to Potiphar’s household, the prison, Egypt, and eventually the entire world.

7. While Joseph seems to have forgiven his brothers before they arrived in Egypt, he put them through a series of tests to see if they were still the same hardhearted men who sold him into slavery. What do the following verses reveal about changes in Joseph’s brothers?

- ☞ Genesis 42:18–28 Rather than being cold and calloused, they named what they did to Joseph as sin and recognized that they were deserving of punishment for what they did to him.
- ☞ Genesis 42:29–43:10 Rather than being willing to go along with the lie that brought his father so much sorrow, when they told him Joseph was dead, Reuben was desperate to assure his father that he would not lose Benjamin. And rather than being greedy and willing to sell his brother, Judah was willing to pledge his own life for the safety of his brother.
- ☞ Genesis 43:11–34 Whereas the brothers had allowed the favoritism shown to Joseph to drive them

to murder, they were “merry” when great favoritism was shown to Benjamin as he was given five times the amount of food they were given in the middle of a famine.

- ☞ Genesis 44:1–34 The brothers showed great anguish and grief at the possibility of leaving Benjamin behind in Egypt, knowing how much pain it would bring to their father. They saw this as a sign of God exacting payment for their guilt in their dealings with Joseph. Judah went to great lengths to offer himself in place of Benjamin, knowing that if Benjamin did not go home to his father, the grief would kill his father.

8. In Genesis 45:1–15, we see the climax of the story as Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. Note that Joseph repeated three times that God had sent him there. How could he say to his brothers, “You sold me here” (45:5), and also, “It was not you who sent me here, but God” (45:8)?

While Joseph’s brothers were responsible in human terms for his being sold as a slave into Egypt, Joseph was confident that God was at work in this evil to accomplish his own good purposes. God worked his will through the everyday events of life directing all things to their appointed end.

9. At the very end of Genesis in chapter 50:19–20, Joseph repeated the theme of God’s sovereignty, which serves as a summary of his entire life, saying to his brothers, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” Explain in your own words what he means by this statement.

By selling him into slavery, Joseph’s brothers intended to harm Joseph. Joseph labeled their action and intent as clearly and completely evil. But God overruled their evil actions, using them to accomplish a purpose that neither Joseph nor his brothers could have fathomed. In this way, God brought good out of evil. Joseph learned that whatever happened to him personally, he was part of a larger purpose ordained by God that cannot be thwarted.

10. How does Joseph point to Christ? Look up the verses in the second column of the chart below, noting the ways Joseph foreshadowed Jesus.

<b>Joseph</b>	<b>Christ</b>
"Israel loved Joseph." (Gen. 37:3)	Matt. 3:17 <i>Just as Joseph was dearly loved by his father, so was Jesus his Father's beloved Son.</i>
"His brothers . . . hated him even more for his dreams and for his words." (Gen. 37:4, 8)	John 1:11; 5:18; 7:5 <i>Just as Joseph's brothers mocked Joseph's dreams, so Jesus's brothers didn't believe him. And just as Joseph was hated for what he said, Jesus was hated and rejected for what he taught.</i>
"His brothers were jealous of him." (Gen. 37:11)	Matt. 27:18 <i>Just as envy drove Joseph's brothers to their murderous intentions, so was it envy that drove the religious leaders to demand Jesus be crucified.</i>
"They conspired against him to kill him." (Gen. 37:18)	Matt. 12:15 <i>Just as Joseph's brother conspired to kill him, so the Pharisees conspired to kill Jesus.</i>
"They stripped him of his robe." (Gen. 37:23)	Matt. 27:28 <i>Just as Joseph's brothers cruelly stripped Joseph of his robe, so Jesus was stripped of his clothes when he was arrested.</i>
"They . . . threw him into a pit. . . . They . . . lifted him out of the pit." (Gen. 37:24, 28)	Matt. 12:41; Mark 16:6 <i>Just as Joseph was thrown into a pit and raised from out of the pit alive, Jesus was "in the heart of the earth" and emerged from the tomb alive.</i>
Joseph served as a slave. (Gen. 39:1)	Phil. 2:6-7 <i>Just as Joseph went from being a beloved son in his father's house to the degradation of slavery in Egypt, Jesus left the glory of his father's home in heaven to take the form of a servant.</i>
Joseph was falsely accused. (Gen. 39:14-18)	Matt. 26:59-60 <i>Just as Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, Jesus was accused by false witnesses.</i>
Joseph's "feet were hurt with fetters; his neck was put in a collar of iron." (Ps. 105:18)	Matt. 27:28-30; John 19:1-2 <i>Just as the innocent Joseph suffered significantly in captivity, so was an innocent Christ subjected to intense physical suffering at the hands of his captors.</i>
Joseph was exalted over all Egypt. (Gen. 41:39, 40)	Phil. 2:9; 1 Pet. 3:22 <i>Just as Joseph emerged from prison and was put in charge of all things in the land, Jesus emerged from the grave and ascended into heaven where he is highly exalted and has been given authority over all things.</i>
"Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, 'Go to Joseph.' . . . All the earth came to Egypt to Joseph to buy grain." (Gen. 41:55, 57)	John 1:16; 6:35; Acts 4:12 <i>While people from all the earth were sent to Joseph to buy grain and be saved from physical starvation, all people must come to Jesus, who is the bread of life, to be saved from spiritual starvation.</i>
Joseph forgave his brothers for their cruelty to him. (Gen. 45:5)	Luke 23:34 <i>Jesus asked God to forgive those who cruelly put him on the cross.</i>
Joseph said, "It was not you who sent me here, but God." (Gen. 45:8)	Isa. 53:4; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28 <i>Just as God was accomplishing his saving purposes through the evil done to Joseph by his brothers, so God accomplished his saving purposes through the evil done to Jesus in the crucifixion.</i>

## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. Dreams play a significant part in Joseph's story. There are three sets of two dreams: Joseph's two dreams, the chief cupbearer and chief baker's dreams, and Pharaoh's dreams. Have you ever had a powerful dream? Are you able to remember your dreams and relate them to other people?

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. Joseph's story in Genesis 37 begins with Joseph having two dreams that he tells his family about. Why do you think God gave Joseph those dreams, and what purposes did they serve in his life?

*Joseph's dreams implanted in him an expectation of what God was going to accomplish in and through his life. His remembrance of those dreams must have given him hope in the times when he wondered if God's plans for his life had been derailed.*

3. How were the dreams of Joseph, his fellow prisoners, and Pharaoh different from the kinds of dreams we have today? What do we have today that Joseph did not have that provides us with insight and even certainty about what is coming in the future?

*Joseph did not have the Scriptures to depend upon to hear God speak, as we do.*

4. We'd like to believe that if we belong to God and are living lives that are pleasing to God, then his presence in our lives will protect us from significant suffering. We have to wonder if Joseph thought to himself, "I believed in that dream you gave me; I ran from temptation. Is this how you reward those who serve you, Lord?" What aspects of Joseph's experience as well as that of other people in the Bible, help us to see that obeying God does not necessarily protect us from suffering?

5. How would you respond to someone who said that Joseph was just really unlucky at times and at other times really lucky?

*It was not luck or coincidence but God's providential control of all things that took Joseph to Egypt, put him in prison, then in the palace, and eventually in place to provide grain to his family and the rest of the world in the famine.*

6. The God of the Bible is so great that he not only breaks through the natural order to do miracles but is also involved concurrently and confluent in all that occurs in this world without violating the natural order. In other words, God is involved in our world in nonmiraculous ways, directing all things toward his foreordained ends for the good of his people. Which do you find more challenging to believe—that God does miracles to accomplish his purposes or that God works through ordinary occurrences to bring about his intended ends?

### Getting Personal

7. The theme of Joseph's story is found in his words, "It was not you who sent me here, but God" (Gen. 45:8), as well as, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gen. 50:20). Are there any experiences in your life that, although painful or hurtful, you can already see God using for good in your life?

### Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

8. Throughout this study we have been seeking to grasp how the passage we're studying fits into the bigger story of God's plan for redemption. And while we see a principle we can apply in our own lives from Joseph's words, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today," why was it important for those

for whom Moses originally wrote Genesis, the children of Israel, to understand specifically what God's purpose was for the suffering in Joseph's life?

*If God had been purposeful in sending Joseph to Egypt and therefore the rest of his family, and intended it for good, then it would help the Israelites to see that God intended to use their experience of slavery and other hardships for their good as well.*

# The Sons of Jacob (Genesis 29–30; 34–35; 38–39; 48–49)

## Personal Bible Study

1. Read Genesis 29:31–30:24. What do you see in the earliest days of Jacob's family that are seeds of future heartache and conflict in the family?

*Jacob was tricked into marrying Leah, and he didn't love her. He loved Rachel, whom he also married. This created rivalry and resentment. Leah was desperate to be loved, and Rachel was desperate to have children. When Leah was able to have children and Rachel could not conceive, that only added to the rivalry and resentment. Rachel, jealous, erupted—making Jacob furious with Rachel, and making Rachel desperate enough to give Jacob her maid to sleep with. Then Leah did the same thing. Leah's desperation drove her to bribery and superstition in a further effort to "one-up" Rachel. This rivalry and resentment in the lives of the mothers must have led to rivalry and resentment between the children.*

2. Read Genesis 34. Remembering that Moses wrote Genesis for the children of Israel as they prepared to enter the Promised Land where they

would need to drive out the Canaanites who were living there, what warnings should they have received from this terrible episode?

*The Israelites could not become comfortable living among the Canaanites or they would become defiled by them. It was also a real warning about misusing something as sacred as circumcision for such an unholy purpose of deception and slaughter. God was very concerned that his people glorify his name among the peoples of the earth and be a blessing to all the peoples of the earth, but through this corrupt way of taking revenge and stealing plunder, they did not bring honor to God's name.*

3. Read Genesis 35:21–26. How was Reuben's action likely more than simply a sexual matter, and how was Jacob's response less than adequate?

*This was an act of sedition, an attempt to replace his father as head of the clan. And there is no evidence that Jacob took any action right away. He seems to have been passive at that point, which may have played a part of the continuing rebellion that led to the brothers' attempted murder of Joseph.*



4. The story of Judah's sinfulness in Canaan, recorded in Genesis 38, is a stark contrast to Joseph's righteous acts in Egypt, recorded in Genesis 39. In the chart below, compare and contrast similar elements in these accounts.

Judah's Sexual Sin with Tamar	Joseph's Refusal to Sin Sexually with Potiphar's Wife
Gen. 38:1 <i>Judah left home willingly.</i>	Gen. 39:1 <i>Joseph was taken forcibly from the Promised Land.</i>
Gen. 38:16 <i>Judah was carried away by his lust after one look at Tamar dressed as a prostitute.</i>	Gen. 39: 7, 10 <i>Joseph refused to give in to temptation even after being repeatedly propositioned by Potiphar's wife.</i>

<b>Judah's Sexual Sin with Tamar</b>	<b>Joseph's Refusal to Sin Sexually with Potiphar's Wife</b>
Gen. 38:18, 25 <i>Judah's signet and cord and staff were used as evidence against him.</i>	Gen. 39: 12–13, 16–18 <i>Joseph's garment was used as false evidence against him.</i>
Gen. 38:26 <i>Judah stood justly accused.</i>	Gen. 39:19–20 <i>Joseph stood unjustly accused.</i>

5. Read 38:27–30. Over and over again in Genesis, God has surprised us by choosing the one we didn't expect, proving that he is the one who determines who is esteemed in his sight. How is this the case with Judah and with his sons, Zerah and Perez? (Be sure to include the insight gained from Matthew 1:3 or Luke 3:33).

*Tamar became pregnant through the despicable sin of Judah. So of all the children born to Jacob's sons, it would seem that Judah would not be the son to be in the line of the Promised One, and that neither of his sons conceived in such wickedness would be in that line. Yet we learn from the New Testament genealogies that Perez was an ancestor of both Mary and Joseph. Perez was not the firstborn, yet he was the one chosen by God from whom Christ would be descended. Out of a wicked sin, God brought the Holy One of Israel.*

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6. Read Genesis 48. Whereas Joseph was born in Canaan and spent his early years in the Patriarch's tents, Joseph's sons were born in Egypt and grew up in the opulence and opportunities of Pharaoh's courts. Their mother was the daughter of an Egyptian priest of sun worship. With this in mind, why would it have been important to Jacob to adopt these boys as his own and bless them?

*Manasseh and Ephraim might be tempted to lean toward their Egyptian heritage and privilege rather than identify themselves with the people of God. By adopting them as his own sons, and giving them his own name to carry on, they would be sealed, in a sense, into Jacob's family and assured a place in Israel's future.*

7. Read Genesis 49: 1–28. How is each aspect of the prophecy for Judah and his tribe fulfilled by Christ? In the chart below, read the specific prophecy Jacob spoke and note in the second column how it is fulfilled by Christ.

<b>Prophesied to Judah</b>	<b>Fulfilled by Christ</b>
Praise: "Judah, your brothers shall praise you . . . bow down before you." (Gen. 49:8)	Phil. 2:9–10 <i>Jesus is the descendant of Judah to whom all praise belongs and before whom every knee will bow.</i>
Power: "Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies. . . . Judah is a lion's cub." (Gen. 49:8–9)	Rev. 5:5, 11:16–18 <i>Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who will reign in power, rewarding his servants and destroying his enemies.</i>
Preeminence: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet." (Gen. 49:10)	Rev. 19:14–16 <i>Jesus will rule over all people as the King of kings and Lord of lords.</i>
Prosperity: "The choice vine . . . washed his garments in wine. . . . Teeth whiter than milk." (Gen. 49:11–12)	John 2:1–11; Eph. 1:18; 2:7 <i>During his ministry, Jesus exhibited the abundance he promises. Jesus will share with us his own inheritance, which is the richness of his grace.</i>



8. Genesis has provided us with a history on the origins of the people of God—the people God has called to himself and covenanted with. The rest of the Bible is not a general history of the world but the history of God’s people, and the Bible ends with a picture of the future of God’s people. What key truth do we learn about those God calls “my people” from each of the following verses:

- ☞ Genesis 17:7–8: *God established his people by a covenant with Abraham—an everlasting covenant in which he promised to “always” be “your God” to Abraham and his descendants.*
- ☞ Exodus 3:10: *Just as God sovereignly brought Jacob and his sons to Egypt, he established and increased them as a people while there and sent Moses to bring them out of Egypt.*
- ☞ Ruth 1:16: *Though Ruth was a Canaanite, she went with Naomi because she wanted to be part of the people of God. This shows that being part of the people of God is not a matter of race but of faith.*
- ☞ Isaiah 19:21–25: *Foreign nations who were once enemies of Israel will turn to the Lord and will be called by God, “My people.”*
- ☞ Jeremiah 24:7: *To be “my people” is not a matter of race but a matter of the heart—having a heart that embraces the covenant God and lives before him in repentance and obedience.*
- ☞ Ezekiel 37:12–14: *God’s purposes for his people are and always have been centered in resurrection to the ultimate land of Israel, which is the new heaven and the new earth.*
- ☞ Zechariah 2:10–12: *Many nations will become part of “my people.”*
- ☞ Romans 9:25–27: *Those who were not “my people” will be called “beloved,” “sons of the living God,” and “my people.” And only the faithful remnant of the sons of Israel will be saved.*
- ☞ Galatians 3:27–29: *God’s people are not defined by race or class or gender but are one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ then you belong to the people of God who will inherit the promises made to Abraham.*
- ☞ Revelation 21:7: *In the new heaven and the new earth “all who are victorious” are the true people of God who will inherit the blessings of God.*

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## Discussion Guide

### Getting the Discussion Going

1. At the beginning of the chapter, there was a quote from the classic *To Kill a Mockingbird* in which Jem says, “Atticus says you can choose your friends but you sho’ can’t choose your family, an’ they’re still kin to you no matter whether you acknowledge ‘em or not, and it makes you look right silly when you don’t.” What kinds of things would most of us be looking for if we could choose our own family?

### Getting to the Heart of It

2. This week we’ve been focused on the sons of Jacob, the leaders of the twelve tribes who will make up the nation of Israel. What stands out to you about these twelve sons and about God’s choosing them to be his people?

3. Read Deuteronomy 7:7–9 and 1 Corinthians 1:27–29. What do these verses reveal about how God chooses who will belong to him?

4. In the Old Testament, the people of God weren’t synonymous with the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob but most often with the “true sons of Abraham,” who put their faith in God’s promise of an offspring who would save his people from their sins and therefore bless them. In the same way, the people of God in the New Testament era are those who have put their faith in Jesus as the promised offspring through whom salvation and blessings flow. So, the people of God are those in both the Old and New Testament eras who responded to God by faith and whose spiritual origin rests exclusively in God’s grace. Look back at the notes you made in the final Personal Bible Study ques-

tion about those God called “my people.” What stood out to you? Did anything change, challenge, or expand concerning whom you’ve always understood to be the people of God?

5. Many of us come to the Bible with an individualistic view of Christianity. While God certainly cares for us, interacts with us as individuals, and has purposes for us that are personal, we have to balance that perspective with the truth that the heart of the story of the Bible is God’s dealings not with individuals but with a people—a people he has called to himself from all the peoples of the earth. So while there is a great deal we can learn from Genesis about how we can expect God to deal with us as individuals, we cannot miss the context, which is that God’s purposes are not primarily about individuals but about his chosen people. What does this mean for the person who says, “I love Jesus, but I don’t need the church”?

### Getting Personal

6. In the blessings Jacob gave to his sons, we see the judgment and mercy of God at work. Several of them would have to live with some natural

consequences of their past actions. Yet all of them were blessed by being part of God’s chosen people. As you think about your own past failures, the consequences you’ve lived with because of past sins, how does it encourage you to see God’s choice of these sons of Jacob as his special possession?

### Getting How It Fits into the Big Picture

7. Throughout this study, we have been seeking to grasp how the passage we’re studying fits into the bigger story of God’s plan for redemption. Both Genesis and Revelation end on a similar note—waiting for the one to whom the scepter belongs, the salvation of the Lord (Gen. 49:10, 18). Revelation ends with the cry, “Come, Lord Jesus!” (22:20). How is our waiting for God’s salvation like that of the sons of Jacob, and how is it different?

*It is the same in that we are waiting for the same person and have no clear sense of how long that waiting will last. It is different in that we know much more about the Promised One than the sons of Jacob knew, because we have the record of his first coming and much more revelation about what to expect in his second coming.*

## Notes on Week 1

### *The Beginning in Light of the Ending*

We start at the end because it was at the end of his earthly ministry that Jesus made it clear to his disciples that the whole story of the Old Testament, beginning in Genesis, had always been about him.

#### **Seeing Jesus**

#### **Where We Must Look to See Jesus**

What It Will Take to See Jesus

How We Will Come to Understand Jesus

## Notes on Week 2

*All Things New*

Is there any hope for us, in this world where everything gets old, to actually become new? We find the answer to this question by beginning at the beginning of God's story in Genesis 1 when everything was new.

### **The Eternal Word**

*The Eternal Word Illumined the Darkness*

*The Eternal Word Ordered the Chaos*

*The Eternal Word Filled the Emptiness*

*God Breathed into Man the Breath of Life*

*The Eternal Word Rested*

## **The Living Word**

The good news of the gospel is that the agent of creation, the eternal word spoken by God, became the Living Word, the incarnation of God.

*Agent of Creation*

*Sustainer of Creation*

*Light of the World*

*As Jesus Walked on this Earth, He Did What He Had Done  
at Creation—Forming, Filling, Illuminating*

To be “born again” is to experience a second genesis. It is a new beginning, a fresh start in life. Through an instantaneous act of regeneration, a person is changed from a spiritually dead human being into a spiritually alive human being. Here is the hope we find as we begin to see Jesus in Genesis 1—that though we’ve made a mess of things, though we’ve made ourselves at home in the darkness, though we have filled our lives with so many things and yet find ourselves empty, lifeless, and restless—Jesus can and will illumine us, shape us, fill us, breathe new life into us, and give us rest. We can be made new on the inside through the power of the Living Word.



## Notes on Week 3

### *You Don't Have to Hide*

We have all inherited this sin nature from our parents and from our ultimate parents, Adam and Eve. But we've also been offered the same hope that was promised to Adam and Eve—a way to be good again.

### **The First Adam: Tested and Tempted in a Garden Paradise**

#### *The Test*

God put a tree in the middle of the garden to test Adam and train him to call good “good” and evil “evil.” But into the goodness of the garden of God, a serpent appeared.

#### *The Serpent Questioned God's Word*

#### *The Serpent Added to God's Word*

#### *The Serpent Denied God's Word*

#### *Eve's Response*

## *The Cosmic Consequences*

This could be the end of the story. God had every right to bring about the judgment of death right then and there. This serves, however, as the beginning of a greater story. While we hide in shame and fear, God seeks for us in grace and mercy. While we clearly deserve to die, God comes to us to grant us life.

### *God's Curse on the Serpent*

### *God's Curse on the Woman*

### *God's Curse on the Man*

### *Adam's Response to the Curse*

### *God's Grace in the Midst of the Curse*

## **The Second Adam: Tested and Tempted in a Barren Wilderness**

Adam failed the test in the garden. He failed to live up to all that God intended for him. And because he disobeyed, Adam lost for us the perfect environment and the perfect fellowship he and Eve enjoyed with the Creator. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman" (Gal. 4:4).

## **The Second Adam: Tested and Tempted in a Dark Garden**

*The Second Adam Gained for Us More Than the First Adam Lost for Us*

From eternity past, God intended that the sin-bringing Adam would point us to the sin-bearing second Adam. We are all children of Adam by birth. It is only by rebirth that we become children of God, as we place our faith in the second Adam. Either we are connected to Adam and destined to die, or we are connected to Christ and destined to live forever with him. "The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over many. But even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17 NLT).

## Notes on Week 4

*What Will Have the Last Word in My Life?*

### **Noah: A Sinner Saved by Grace (6:5–10)**

It was the grace of God poured out on Noah, based not on Noah's goodness but on God's choice, that made Noah righteous. Noah did not earn this favor from God. It was a gift, pure and simple and undeserved. In fact, God's favor is never something that can be earned or purchased. It is always a gift.

*The World Noah Was Born Into*

*But Noah Found Favor in the Eyes of the Lord (6:8)*

*The Grace That Found Noah Changed Noah*

*While Noah Found and Knew the Grace of God, He Did Not See and Understand It as We Can. Grace Has Come to Us in the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ.*

## **Noah: A Sinner Protected by Grace (6:11–7:24)**

*Noah Protected in the Ark*

### **Noah: A Sinner Preserved by Grace**

While Noah and the ark is a story of judgment and death, it is also a story of grace and new life, a story of a promise kept to send a flood, and a promise made to never destroy the earth again through a flood. This is the story of how a world of evil was cleansed and given a fresh start.

*God's Covenant Promise: Self-Motivated Mercy throughout the Rest of Human History*

*God's Covenant Sign: the Rainbow*

*The Failure in Noah's Final Chapter*

*The Favor in Noah's Final Failure*

## Notes on Week 5

*A Name for Myself*

**God's Intention**

**Babel's Ambition**

**God's Observation**

God's Intervention

Babel's Confusion

Abraham's Alienation



## God's Provision

God intended to give Abraham freely what the men of Babel had sought to get for themselves apart from God.

## Babel's Redemption

## Our Decision

Here is the gospel in the account of the tower of Babel: God has not left us here to work our way up to him or to make something of ourselves apart from him. The truth of the gospel, and the mercy of God, is that he has come down to us. He will build a city for us. He will give us a name that will endure. How will he do this? He will do this through Christ.

## Notes on Week 6

*The Day You've Waited For*

### **A Longing for the Day All of God's Promises Will Be Fulfilled**

*God's Promises to Abraham:*

*Implications:*

**A Longing for the Day the Righteousness Credited to Him Will Be Revealed**  
And [Abraham] believed the LORD, and [the LORD] counted it to him as righteousness. (15:6)

*What Was It That Abraham Believed Specifically That Brought This About?*

*How Was It “Counted” or “Credited” to Abraham?*

## **A Longing for the Day the Covenant's Curse Will Be Removed**

God made a promise to Abraham, but to accommodate Abraham's doubt about whether God would come through on his promises, God went even further to make this covenantal oath.

*Sources of Abraham's Doubts*

*The Covenant Oath*

*At the Cross*

## Notes on Week 7

*How Will I Know I Am Loved?*

**I Know You Love Me Because You've Marked Me as Belonging to You**  
*God's Instructions to Abraham*

*God's Expanded, Personal Promise to Abraham*

*The New Testament Sign of Covenant Membership: Baptism*

**I Know You Love Me Because You've Kept Your Promises to Me**  
*God Changed Abram to Abraham and Sarai to Sarah*

*God Promised and Did the Impossible*

God was faithful to Abraham not because of Abraham's faithfulness but in spite of Abraham's faithlessness. God kept all of his promises to Abraham, who did not keep his promises to God. The good news of the gospel is that even though we fail in keeping our promises to God, he will keep his promises to us.

**I Know You Love Me Because You Sacrificed Your Life for Me**  
*God's Difficult Instructions*

*Abraham's Obedient Response*

*Abraham's Confident Conclusion*

*God's Faithful Provision*

## Notes on Week 8

*Unless You Bless Me*

### Grasping His Brother's Heel

*Birthright*

*Blessing*

### Dreaming of a Ladder

*God Came Down to Bless and Promise*



Living Far from Home

Returning to His Brother

Wrestling with an Angel

Walking with a Limp

Becoming Israel

Greater Than Jacob

Jesus himself is the greatest blessing God could ever give you, and because he has given Christ for you and to you, you have everything you need. "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

## Notes on Week 9

*Can Anything Good Come out of This?*

### **What Might Jesus Have Taught from the Story of Joseph?**

Joseph's life was a showcase for the saving work of God. If we want to see how God will accomplish the salvation of his people, we will explore Joseph's story not primarily to learn from Joseph's example but to see the greater Savior that Joseph points to.

### **Beloved Son**

*Joseph*

*Jesus*

**Fruitful Sufferer**

*Joseph*

*Jesus*

**Exalted Savior**

*Joseph*

*Jesus*

## You Meant It for Evil, but God Meant It for Good

*God Allowed It or God Meant It?*

*Joseph's Suffering in Egypt*

*Jesus's Suffering on the Cross*

We may not be as fortunate as Joseph to be able to look back at our suffering and point to the clear purpose God had in it. We may never see exactly how God is using our loss for good in this life. But just because we can't see his purpose doesn't mean he doesn't have one.

## Notes on Week 10

### *They Say You Can't Choose Your Family*

(This may be a teaching session during which, rather than trying to take a lot of notes, you simply sit back and listen and think it through. But if you do want to take some notes, here is the basic outline. You may also want to pray the closing prayer provided at the bottom of the page, eyes open and reading along with Nancy.)

*Since God got to choose the family he was born into, what kind of family did he choose?*

#### **A Picture of Family Failure**

#### **A Picture of the Family's Future**

## A Picture of Fulfillment

*Lion of the tribe of Judah, who reigns from your throne;  
Savior of the world who feeds our hungry souls;  
Israel of God, who has shown us the face of God;  
beloved Son, from whom the knife was not spared;  
our shield, our very great reward;  
Lord of the nations;  
ark of God, who protects us from the judgment we deserve;  
second Adam, who gained for us more than the first Adam took from us,  
living Word and light of the world—  
we have seen you throughout the pages of Genesis, and it has  
made us love you more and long for you more.  
You are the Promised One who came, and you will come again.  
Like Jacob and his sons, we wait for your salvation, O Lord.*