

# FAMILY OF FAITH

ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB

- STUDY GUIDE -



## **“Family of Faith”**

### **Sermon Series by Pastor Eric Laverentz**

The story of God’s family begins long before Jesus of Nazareth. It goes all the way back to the opening chapters of the Bible. God chose a man named Abraham and promised that through his family, all the earth would be blessed. And indeed, they have been—but God’s people were far from perfect. In fact, they were often downright dysfunctional. Yet God remained faithful to them, just as He remains faithful to us.

Join us this fall at First Presbyterian Church of Edmond as we journey through the Book of Genesis and explore the fallible family of God whom He has blessed to bless the whole earth.

9/14	<i>A Great Nation</i>	<i>Genesis 12:1-5</i>
9/21	<i>Blessed Again</i>	<i>Genesis 14:17-24</i>
9/28	<i>A Patience Problem</i>	<i>Genesis 16:1-6</i>
10/5	<i>From One Comes Many</i>	<i>Genesis 17:1-14</i>
10/12	<i>When God Visits</i>	<i>Genesis 18:1-15</i>
10/26	<i>The Justice and Wrath of God</i>	<i>Genesis 19:1-7</i>
11/2	<i>God Provides</i>	<i>Genesis 22:1-8</i>
11/16	<i>Two People</i>	<i>Genesis 25:19-34</i>
11/23	<i>God Descends</i>	<i>Genesis 28:10-22</i>
11/30	<i>Family Tradition</i>	<i>Genesis 29:15-30</i>
12/14	<i>Wrestling with God</i>	<i>Genesis 32:25-36</i>
12/21	<i>Good News for All People</i>	<i>Genesis 35:9-20</i>

**Share Your Story**

**Invest In Others**

**Read the Word**

**Pray Faithfully**

**Worship Passionately**

**Serve Community**

**Give Generously**



**NEW LIFE,**  
through **JESUS,**  
for **EDMOND**  
and the **WORLD.**

# Who's Who

## Abraham

Abraham, originally named Abram, is the first of the Patriarchs and is often called the “father of faith.” His account begins in Genesis 12 when God calls him to leave his homeland and journey to a land that He would show him. God promised Abraham that he would become a great nation, and through him, all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3). Abraham’s faith is tested in various ways, most notably in the command to sacrifice his son Isaac, a test which he passes, demonstrating his unwavering trust in God (Genesis 22:1-19).

God established a covenant with Abraham, promising him numerous descendants and the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession (Genesis 15:18-21). This covenant is marked by the rite of circumcision, which became a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham’s descendants (Genesis 17:9-14).

## Isaac

Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, is the second Patriarch. His birth was a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah, occurring despite their advanced age (Genesis 21:1-7). Isaac’s most significant narrative involves his near-sacrifice by Abraham, which underscores the themes of faith and obedience (Genesis 22:1-19) and presages the death of God’s Son Jesus as a sacrifice for our sin. Isaac married Rebekah, and they had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. The covenantal promise is passed to Jacob, despite Isaac’s initial preference for the older son Esau, illustrating the divine election that often defies human expectations (Genesis 25:19-34).

## Jacob

Jacob, later named Israel, is the third Patriarch. His life was one of struggle and transformation. From birth, Jacob is depicted as a figure who contends for blessing, first by grasping his brother Esau’s heel and later by obtaining Esau’s birthright and blessing through cunning (Genesis 25:26, 27:1-29).

Jacob’s defining encounter with God occurs at Bethel, where he dreams of a ladder reaching to heaven and receives God’s promise of land and descendants (Genesis 28:10-22). His name was changed to Israel after wrestling with the Angel of the Lord, symbolizing his perseverance and the establishment of the nation that bears his name (Genesis 32:22-32).

Jacob fathered twelve sons, who become the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel. His favoritism towards Joseph, one of his younger sons, sets the stage for the events that lead the family to Egypt, setting the scene for the Exodus narrative (Genesis 37:3-4).

## Sarah

Sarah, originally named Sarai, was the wife and half-sister of Abraham (Abram), sharing the same father Terah but different mothers. Beautiful and childless, she accompanied Abraham from Ur to Haran and then to Canaan at God’s call. Sarah faced two episodes of deception: In Egypt, to protect himself from Pharaoh, Abraham called her his sister, leading Pharaoh to take her into his house. God afflicted Pharaoh’s household with plagues, revealing the truth and allowing them to depart wealthy. Similarly, in Gerar with King Abimelech, God intervened in a dream to prevent harm, rebuking Abimelech.

Barren for decades, Sarah grew impatient with God’s promise of descendants. At 65, when Abraham was 75, she gave her Egyptian servant Hagar to Abraham as a concubine to bear a child. Hagar conceived Ishmael but then despised Sarah, who dealt harshly with her, causing Hagar to flee temporarily. God reaffirmed the promise to Abraham when he was 99, changing Sarai’s name to Sarah (“princess,” signifying her role in becoming a mother of many nations) and promising she would bear a son (Genesis 17:15–16). Miraculously, Sarah gave birth to Isaac at 90, fulfilling the promise and prompting Abraham’s circumcision covenant (Genesis 21:1–7). Sarah lived to 127 and was buried in the Cave of Machpelah, establishing it as a family burial site.

## Rebekah

Rebekah was the wife of Isaac and mother of twins Esau and Jacob. Born in Paddan Aram to Bethuel and granddaughter of Abraham’s brother Nahor, she agreed to leave her homeland by marrying Isaac, traveling from Mesopotamia to Canaan, where Isaac comforted her after his mother Sarah’s death (Genesis 24:67).

Barren for 20 years, Rebekah conceived after Isaac’s prayers. God revealed to her that her twins would father two nations, with the younger (Jacob) ruling the older (Esau) (Genesis 25:23). Esau, the hunter and firstborn, was Isaac’s favorite, while Rebekah favored Jacob. As Isaac aged and grew blind, Rebekah orchestrated Jacob’s deception—disguising him as Esau with goat hair and savory stew—to secure the covenant blessing for Jacob (Genesis 27). When Esau threatened Jacob, she sent him to her brother Laban in Haran for safety (Genesis 27:42–45). Rebekah’s actions ensured the Abrahamic covenant passed to Jacob, founding the Israelite line, though they caused family strife.

## Who's Who

## Leah

Leah was the eldest daughter of Laban, a wealthy Aramean shepherd in Haran, and the older sister of Rachel. She was the unwilling first wife of Jacob, her first cousin once removed, through deception by her father. Fleeing Esau after securing the birthright and blessing, Jacob arrived in Haran and fell in love with Rachel, agreeing to work seven years for her hand. On the wedding night, Laban substituted Leah, veiled as the bride, exploiting local custom that the firstborn daughter marries first.

Though Leah was unloved by Jacob, God saw her affliction and opened her womb, while Rachel remained barren initially (Genesis 29:31). Leah bore Jacob six sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun—and a daughter, Dinah—forming half of the twelve tribes of Israel. Jacob eventually favored Joseph, exacerbating tensions, but continuing a family tradition of patriarchal and matriarchal favoritism. Leah died before Jacob's return to Bethel and his reconciliation with Esau. Despite her struggles, her legacy is immense: through Judah, the royal tribe of David and Jesus descends.

## Rachel

Rachel was the younger daughter of Laban. She was strikingly beautiful with a “lovely figure and fair features” (Genesis 29:17), working as a shepherdess for her father’s flocks. She met Jacob at a well when he fled Esau. Struck by love at first sight, Jacob kissed her, wept, and offered to work seven years for her hand in marriage (Genesis 29:9–12, 18). Jacob married Rachel after being deceived into marrying her older sister Leah.

Initially barren—a source of deep pain amid rivalry with fertile Leah—Rachel cried to Jacob, “Give me children, or I die!” (Genesis 30:1). She gave her servant Bilhah to Jacob as a surrogate, bearing Dan and Naphtali (Genesis 30:4–8). Later, Rachel conceived and bore Joseph, her firstborn, whom she cherished deeply (Genesis 30:22–24).

As Jacob fled Laban's household with his family and flocks, Rachel stole her father's household idols, hiding them under her camel's saddle. During the arduous return to Canaan, Rachel gave birth to Benjamin near Bethlehem but died from labor complications. Jacob buried her there outside of the family tomb (Genesis 35:20). Her favored son Joseph rose to prominence in Egypt, and Benjamin's tribe descended from him.

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# Lesson 1: A Great Nation

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

*So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.*

## Genesis 12:1-7

1. God's call to Abram was to leave everything he knew and take his family to an undisclosed location. (12:1) How did Abram respond? (12:4-5) How would you have responded to such a call? Has God ever called you to make a significant, costly step of faith? How did He show His faithfulness to you?
2. What is God's promise to Abram? (12:2-3) How have all the families of the earth been blessed through Abram? What echoes do you see here of Matthew 28:18-20 and Acts 2:5-11?
3. What obstacles did Abram face in responding to God's call and in believing God's promise that He would make of him a great nation and give him the land? (Genesis 11:30, 12:6, Hebrews 11:12) Why does God never call us to anything easy? Is anything too difficult for God? (Jeremiah 32:27, Zechariah 4:6)
4. Seven centuries later, when God's many people gathered at Shechem, they faced a different set of obstacles, what were they? (Joshua 24:14-16) Are your obstacles to serving the Lord today more internal or external?
5. What was Abram's mistake in Egypt? (12:11-13) How did Abram underestimate God by denying that Sarai was his wife? How is fear the opposite of faith? What/Who is the antidote to our fear? (Deuteronomy 31:6-7, Galatians 5:10)

6. How did Abram's fear affect other, innocent people? (12:17) Can we be a blessing to others when we do not act out of faith? How did God redeem even Abram's fear and lack of faith in Egypt? (Genesis 12:16,19-20) Is God's grace greater than our sin? (Ephesians 1:7-9)

## ACTION STEP

Identify some obstacles that you perceive are in your way preventing you from being faithful to God's call. Ask the Lord to remove those obstacles or help you see how they are opportunities to trust Him.

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## Lesson 2: Blessed Again

*After his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said,*

*"Blessed be Abram by God Most High,  
Possessor of heaven and earth;  
and blessed be God Most High,  
who has delivered your enemies into your hand!"*

*And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have lifted my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich.' I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share."*

## Genesis 14:17-24

1. Why did Abram and Lot part ways? (13:5-7) How does prosperity sometimes lead to strife? How does Abram make their peaceful parting possible? (13:8-9) How does Abram's entrusting of Lot to choose his land express confidence in God's plan? Is there anyone in your life with whom you should pursue a peaceful parting?

2. How did you think Abram's choice to walk "by faith and not by sight" impacted his choices?

How does God reconfirm His promise to Abram? (12:14-16) How did Abram respond again to the Lord's promise? (13:18) Is there anything for which you need to give thanks to God? Why is it sometimes so hard to remember to give thanks?

3. How does Lot's choice to live near wicked Sodom prove disastrous? What is the difference between loving the sinner and making our home near the sinner? (Matthew 5:43-45; Psalm 1:1-2). How does Abram show his faith in unseen things by taking on five kings? (Psalm 20:6-8) How does Abram seem well prepared for this battle? (Genesis 13:13-14) How does our faithfulness leave us well prepared to meet whatever challenges we encounter? (Proverbs 6:6-11)

4. How are the two kings who meet Abram at Shaveh different? Of what is Melchizedek priest and king? (14:4) Who is another priest and king mentioned in Scripture? How is the king of Sodom described? (13:13)

5. How does Abram's response to each king differ? How is Abrams' refusal to receive anything from the worldly king a model for us? How is Abram's recognition of the tithe to Melchizedek a model for us? (Mark 12:17)

## ACTION STEP

Ask the Holy Spirit to provide you an opportunity to by faith and not by sight this week.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

## Lesson 3:

# A Patience Problem

*Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. 4And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!" But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your servant is in your power; do to her as you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her, and she fled from her.*

## Genesis 16:1-6

7. What does God command Abram not to do, and on what does He base His command? (Genesis 15:1) What is Abrams's objection? Is it valid? (Jeremiah 32:27) What are your objections or concerns about God's promises in your life? Are they valid? What visual image does the Lord give Abram to show how his descendants will be? (Genesis 15:5-6) Have you ever received a visual image from the Lord? What was it?

2. Does Abram ultimately trust or disbelieve the Lord? (Genesis 15:6) Why is it righteousness to believe the Lord? Does our belief or our actions make us righteous? (Romans 4:1-5) What is the sign of faith? (Hebrews 11:8-9) Is there any place in your life where your lack of obedience is demonstrating a lack of faith?

3. How does the Lord reveal His faithfulness to Abram? (Genesis 15:12-20) What specific covenant does the Lord make about the location of the land? Why is this so important for Israel later on? Does this still matter today?

4. Why does Sarai become so impatient with the Lord's plan? (Genesis 16:2) Why should we assume the Lord always has a good reason for His timing? What was the Lord's reason here for the delay? (15:16) Have you ever rushed God? What was the result? Why does God not act until "the fullness of time?" (Ephesians 1:10, Galatians 4:4-5)

5. When do things go badly for Sarai and Hagar? (Genesis 16:4-5) What does the Lord promise for those who wait upon Him? (Isaiah 40:31) Is God slow? If we perceive Him as slow, what is the reason? (2 Peter 3:9) Does God redeem Abram's disobedience? How does God provide for Hagar? (Genesis 16:7-10) Why do you think Abram shows great faith sometimes and other times does not? How are we like that?

## ACTION STEP

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you something that you either forced to happen or gave up on because out of a lack of trust in the Lord. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to trust Him again on that particular issue .

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## Lesson 4: From One Comes Many

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And 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, and I will be their God.”*

*And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”*

Genesis 17:1-14

1. When El Shaddai, God Almighty, invited Abram into an intimate covenant relationship, He gave him a new name that contained God’s covenant promise in its meaning. What did El Shaddai want His Abraham to understand would happen in the future? (Genesis 17:4-7) In the Bible names usually convey the essence of a person, and giving a name conveyed rule or ownership. What then do you make of Abram’s and Sari’s name change? How do we see Abraham’s name changed played out on Pentecost? (Acts 2:5-12)

2. God Almighty gave Abram & his family a new identity—a people set apart for relationship with Him. The sign was to Abraham and his descendants, that they would be circumcised. With God’s covenant cut with Abram (Genesis 15:9-21), how does He confirm it (Genesis 17:2, 4-8)? God chose circumcision to ratify His covenant with Abraham. What does circumcision demonstrate (Genesis 15:6; 17:1; see Romans 4:9-12)?

3. In promising certain privileges, protection and provision to Abram, what does that imply for us, as an “everlasting covenant” (Genesis 17)? How did Jesus affirm this covenant? (Mark 16:15-18)

4. If Abram’s only responsibility under the earlier version of the covenant was to “believe” (Genesis 15:6), what is required now (Genesis 17:9-14)? If cutting off one’s foreskin as a sign of God’s covenant is no longer required of God’s people, what is yet required (see Galatians 5:6)? Circumcision then did not confer salvation any more than baptism does today, yet that truth is often missed in both Jewish and Christian circles: Why?

### ACTION STEP

Go to a place where you expect you will be different than the other people there—economically, racially, socially, educationally. Take note of what you see and particularly what you see God doing there. Ask the Lord how are you at work among this people who is different than me?

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## Lesson 5: When God Visits

*And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham went quickly into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quick! Three seahs of fine flour! Knead it, and make cakes." And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to a young man, who prepared it quickly. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them. And he stood by them under the tree while they ate.*

*They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." The LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" 13 The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."*

## Genesis 18:1-15

1. Who are Abraham's three visitors? (Hebrews 13:2, Genesis 19:1-3) How do we know that Abraham considers at least one of them to be God? What does Abraham do to show reverence to God? (Genesis 18:2) How does he welcome God? (Genesis 18:3-8) What common thing do both Abraham and Joshua do when they encounter a 'mysterious visitor' like this and what does it tell us? (Joshua 5:13-15) What does John's introduction of Jesus suggest about figures like these? (John 1:1, 14)

2. How does Abraham's hospitality show how we should welcome God into our life? What stands out about Abraham's hospitality? How does Abraham's hospitality conform to the biblical definition of faith? (Hebrews 11:1) How does it not? What does good hospitality look like to you? What's the greatest hospitality you have ever experienced?

3. Why do you think Sarah lost hope in God's promise? Is God ever slow in delivering upon His promises? (2 Peter 3:9) Why do you think our clock runs so differently than God's? Can you relate to Sarah's statement in Genesis 18:12? Are there any hopes and dreams that you have given up on? What are they? Why can we trust the Lord with your greatest hopes? (Psalm 37:4) What unlocks the Lord's gifts?

4. Is anything too hard for God? (Genesis 18:14) Why did Sarah deny laughing? (Genesis 18:15) Of what was Sarah afraid? Do you think Sarah is allowing her pain to overcome her here? Why or why not? Why would Sarah feel pain? (Genesis 11:30) Did Sarah and Abraham overcome their doubts and pain? How do we know? (Hebrews 11:11-12) Are we ever afraid to receive God's blessings? Why? How is comfort different than joy? Which do you lean toward? What does God delight to give us? Why is joy often more difficult than comfort?

### ACTION STEP

Practice showing Biblical hospitality to someone. Go over the top to give a welcome to a person who is not expecting it.

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## Lesson 6: Grace and Wrath of God

*The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth and said, "My lords, please turn aside to your servant's house and spend the night and wash your feet. Then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the town square." But he pressed them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house. And he made them a feast and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.*

*But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them." Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly.*

## Genesis 19:1-7

1. How does Abraham display his compassion for Sodom? Is Sodom worthy of any compassion? (Genesis 18:22-33) (Luke 10:11-12) How does Abraham prefigure Moses and Jesus? (Numbers 14:13-19) Is Abraham more compassionate than God, or is God helping Abraham to learn how to love the difficult? If Abraham is our model and our forerunner, what is our call to love the sinner and the evildoer? (Jeremiah 29:7, Matthew 5:44-46)

2. How does Lot demonstrate his faithfulness to God? (Genesis 19:1-3) What does God command about welcoming strangers? (Matthew 25:34-40, Deuteronomy 24:17-22) How does Lot's offer of his daughters to the rabble outside his door speak to his faithfulness to God's command? How costly is it sometimes to follow God's command? Does God pay us back? (Matthew 19:28-30)

3. How was Lot unfaithful? (Genesis 19:15-16, 19:30-33) What were the disastrous consequences of his and his family's unfaithfulness? (Genesis 19:26, 19:30-38) What does it mean to be double-minded? How are the double-minded regarded? (Psalm 119:113) What is the problem with the double-minded? Can they be depended upon? (James 1:5-9)

4. What was the city of Sodom's offense that earned God's wrath? (Genesis 19:4) What do you believe is terrible about this offense? What does this offense tell you about the condition of the hearts in Sodom?

5. What happens when we continually turn from God? (Romans 1:24-25) Where does our turning from God and God's abandonment of us to our sin begin? (Romans 1:21-23) Will the sinful world and all those who continually deny God share Sodom's fate? (Luke 17:27-30) After pleading for the cities, what do you think Abraham thought as he looked upon the smoking valley where Sodom and Gomorrah stood? (Genesis 19:27-28)

6. Did God save Lot because of his faith or Abraham's? (Genesis 19:29) How does the faith of others impact us? Can you name someone whose faith has impacted you? Whom do you impact?

## ACTION STEP

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you a place where you are double-minded. Ask the Lord to show you how to follow Him single-mindedly in that issue.

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## Lesson 7: God Provides

*After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.*

## Genesis 22:1-8

1. What is so shocking about God's call to Abraham to sacrifice his son? Has God ever called you to do anything shocking? Did you submit? Why or why not? How did Abraham believe God would redeem his sacrifice of his son? (Hebrews 11:19) How does this belief point incredibly to Jesus? What important building was later erected on the site appointed for the sacrifice? (2 Chronicles 3:1) Why does this make such a powerful statement? (2 Chronicles 6:10-11)

2. Does the Bible teach that Abraham hesitated or proceeded deliberately? What details suggest Abraham proceeded deliberately? (Genesis 22:3-5) Why does Genesis teach that God asked Abraham to take this step? (Genesis 22:1) What other Son carried the wood of sacrifice on his back? (John 19:16-17) What did Jesus teach about carrying your own cross? (Matthew 16:24-25) Do you think Isaac had any idea what might be coming?

3. Why do you think Abraham had such faith that God would provide? (Genesis 22:8) How was Abraham banking on the Lord's character to deliver in this situation? Why is the past a good indicator of how God will provide in the future? (James 1:17)

4. What goes through your mind when you think about Abraham raising the knife to sacrifice his son? Why did the Angel wait until the last minute to stop Abraham? (Genesis 22:12) Did the Father allow Jesus to be sacrificed or did He plan it? (Acts 2:22-23)

5. How did God reward Abraham for his obedience and faithfulness? (Genesis 22:16-18) How is this promise different than God's original covenant with Abraham? (Genesis 12:1-3) What does God seek from us? (Matthew 28:19-20) Make a list of all the similarities you see between the sacrifice of Isaac and Jesus' journey to the cross and His resurrection. What does this suggest to you about the unity of God's Word?

## ACTION STEP

Take some time to make a list of how God has provided for you and tell Him you are grateful, one by one.

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## Lesson 8: Two People

*These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham fathered Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her,*

*"Two nations are in your womb,  
and two peoples from within you shall be divided;  
the one shall be stronger than the other,  
the older shall serve the younger."*

*When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.*

*When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.) Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright now." 32 Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me now." So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.*

*Genesis 25:19-34*

1. How is the struggle within Rebekah's womb a harbinger of the struggles to come for Israel? (Genesis 25:22; Nehemiah 4:7-8) How is the struggle within Rebekah's womb even perhaps a harbinger of struggles to come for Christians? (John 15:18-19) What is the "other nation for Christians?" (Matthew 25:31-32)

2. What is the defining characteristic of the nation that rules? (Genesis 25:23) How do we see that played out in Israel's life? (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Exodus 1:13-14) How does this play out in the life of Christians even today? (1 Corinthians 1:25-31) What weak and small things in your life might you be overlooking?

3. What do you think was so foolish about Esau selling his birthright for a meal? To what does Hebrews compare Esau's trading away his birthright and what were the consequences? (Hebrews 12:16-17) What does Jesus teach about investing in our birthright? (Matthew 6:19-20) Can you think of anything heavenly you have exchanged for something earthly?

4. In what other way do we see Esau reveal his un-godly character? (Genesis 26:34) How did this affect Isaac and Rebekah? (Genesis 26:35) Does our sin ever just impact us?

5. How does Isaac take after his father's poor example? (Genesis 26:6-7) Even though Isaac was not alive when his father masqueraded his wife as his sister, do you think this was Abraham's legacy? What does the Bible teach about sin being generational? (Exodus 34:6-7) What kind of legacy are you leaving for the next generations?

6. What does the LORD promise Isaac before leaving his homeland because of the famine? (Genesis 26:4-5) How did Abraham's faithful obedience provide for his son? What does the LORD promise Isaac at Beersheba? (Genesis 26:23-24) How does Isaac respond in faith?

### ACTION STEP

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you something you could do today to help leave a greater legacy of faithfulness for your children and grandchildren.

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## Lesson 9: God Descends

*Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."*

*So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you."*

## Genesis 28:10-22

1. How do you think the experience with Esau's wives steeled Isaac's resolve to send Jacob to his family's house to find a wife? (Genesis 27:46) Isaac blesses Jacob again (Genesis 28:1) before he sends him. Do you think Isaac has resolved himself to God's plan? How does Romans 8:28 apply to both these events?

2. What does Isaac say to Jacob before sending him off to Paddan-aram? (Genesis 28:3-4) How is this similar to God's promise to Abraham and Isaac so far? What family legacies and truisms have been passed down to us which we in turn pass down? Are these helpful or less than helpful? How does Esau's attempt to please his parents impact your perception of him? Do we get any "hand grenades and horseshoes" points with God? (Matthew 5:48)

3. What do you think the ladder descending from heaven to earth means? (Revelation 21:2)

Perhaps, knowing Jacob's future, why was this vision important for him at this time? What six covenant promises does God reiterate for Jacob? (Genesis 28:13-16) Which of these promises, translated in your own life, is the most meaningful for you?

4. What five things does Jacob do in response to God's promise? (Genesis 28:17-22) How does Jacob's pledge of obedience fall short of Abraham's, as well as the covenant in Deuteronomy? (Deuteronomy 7:11-12) Which is closer to how we tend to operate?

## ACTION STEP

Take a bold step in obedience God. Do something that scares you or is costly. Share this step with your small group.

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## Lesson 10: Family Tradition

*Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.*

*Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. (Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant.) And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" Laban said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." Jacob did so, and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. (Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant.) So Jacob went into Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.*

## Genesis 29:15-30

1. Why does Laban's greeting to Jacob sound familiar? (Genesis 29:14, Genesis 2:23) Why does it also seem particularly inappropriate? Do you think Laban is genuinely excited to see Jacob or does he remember the wealth that Abraham's servant lavished upon him to marry Rebekah?

2. Does working for seven years seem like a fair price for a wife? Why do you think Jacob did not just pay Laban like his grandfather did? (Genesis 24:52) How does Laban take what should be a joyous occasion and turn it into a farce? How does this impact Leah in a tragic way? (Genesis 29:31)

3. What is at root in the basic struggle between Leah and Rachel? Do you see anything Jacob could have done to help alleviate this struggle? (Genesis 29:30) How is this struggle particularly tragic for Rachel? (Genesis 3:16)

4. What signs does Leah show that this struggle affects her self-esteem? (Genesis 29:32-35) Although we can understand, what happens when we ground our self-worth in anything other than Christ? (1 Peter 2:9-11) What tragic steps do we often take in attempting to win others approval? How does God show His approval of us?

5. Why do you think Jacob is so anxious to get away from Laban? What does the Word teach about close, intimate associations with evil-doers? (2 Corinthians 6:14-17) Does this mean we are to have no association at all or just no vulnerability? (James 5:19-20). Is Jacob's wisdom or the Lord's favor responsible for his prosperity? Why is Laban so reluctant to let him go? Do Laban value Jacob or what he can do for him? Does this remind you of any other Biblical stories? (Acts 16:16-20)

### ACTION STEP

Spend time this week on Mark 10:45. Consider what it means that God Himself serves you and gave His life as a ransom for you. Do something to serve someone else who doesn't deserve it and share this experience with your small group.

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# Lesson 11: Wrestling with God

*The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.*

## Genesis 32:22-32

1. Why do you think Jacob's thoughts immediately turned to Esau as soon as he crossed the river? (Genesis 32:3-6) Were Jacob's concerns justifiable? What did Jacob do to mitigate the risk to his family and possessions? (Genesis 32:7, 11-21) What do you think this action said about Jacob? Was he done scheming? How has God redeemed Jacob's "creativity"?

2. What do you think of Jacob's prayer? What does Jacob confess? (Genesis 32:10) What does Jacob request of God? (Genesis 32:11) In whose promise does Jacob ground His prayer and how is this a reflection of his grandfather Abraham? (Genesis 32:12, Romans 4:3)

3. What point do you think God was making by wrestling Jacob all night? Have you ever wrestled with God? Did you win? Does God fight fairly? How is wrestling with others a theme for Jacob's family and life? (Genesis 25:22, 30:8) How is it a theme for God's people? (Hebrews 10:31-33, Revelation 6:9-11) Is there a time in your life when it seemed to you God was not treating you fairly? How do you reconcile that?

4. How does Jacob's broken hip impact his relationship with God? How does our brokenness draw us closer to God? (2 Corinthians 12:9) How did Jacob's wrestling with God encourage him for his meeting with Esau? (Genesis 32:30)

5. Why is it important that Jacob humbled himself before Esau? How did Jacob's humility before his brother allow for reconciliation to happen? Given Esau's old nature, are you surprised that he was able to forgive Jacob? How did Jacob show his cunning and deliberate nature by skillfully placing his family when meeting Esau? How did Jacob's belief in God's provision encourage him in meeting Esau? (Genesis 32:12, Psalm 59:1-2)

## ACTION STEP

Seek reconciliation and/ or forgiveness with someone in your life with who you are estranged. Enter this attempt considering that Jesus has forgiven your sin.

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## Lesson 12: Good News for All People

*God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he called his name Israel. And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." Then God went up from him in the place where he had spoken with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone. He poured out a drink offering on it and poured oil on it. So Jacob called the name of the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.*

*Then they journeyed from Bethel. When they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel went into labor, and she had hard labor. And when her labor was at its hardest, the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for you have another son." And as her soul was departing (for she was dying), she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), and Jacob set up a pillar over her tomb. It is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day.*

## Genesis 35:9-20

1. How do we see Jacob's "trickster" character coming back to haunt him and his family? What harm did this cause to Jacob's family's life and livelihood? (Genesis 34:30) How is the use of circumcision particularly troublesome given God's covenant with Abraham? (Genesis 12:2-3) Do you think the brothers or their father Jacob was right? Or neither?

2. How is the brothers' assault of Hamor and Shechem so different from how Abraham regarded his neighbors? (Genesis 23:6) How is this different than how God's people were instructed when they were the minority in another land? (Jeremiah 29:4-7)

3. What decisive step does Jacob take at Shechem? (Genesis 35:4) What two other important events in the life of Israel took place at Shechem? (Genesis 12:6-8, Joshua 24:1,14-15) Are there any idols we need to put away from our life? What blessing and command does God give to Jacob that He did not give to either Abraham or Isaac? (Genesis 35:11) To whom else did God give this command? (Genesis 1:28, Genesis 9:1) What does this say about the status of Jacob's family and God's people? Do we still follow this command?

4. What does it say about God's faithfulness that Jacob's beloved wife Rachel died immediately after Jacob received the command to be fruitful and multiply? What is the terrible irony about Benjamin's mother dying at his birth? (Joshua 20:35, 21:1-3)

5. How did the consequences of Reuben's terrible act mirror Jacob's own history? (Genesis 25:23) What other eldest son took his father's concubines? (2 Samuel 20:16-20) What happened to him? (2 Samuel 18:9-15) What did Paul call this kind of activity? (2 Corinthians 5:1)

## ACTION STEP

Remember a tragic event in your life. Make a catalog of how you saw God at work in that event. This is not to say this event was for the better but to remember how God is at work even amid tragedy.

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