

PROMISE & BLESSING

November - December 2023 | Trinity Church Golden Grove

Genesis divides neatly into two sections, Chapters 1-11, which tell the story of God and the world, and then 12-50, the story of God, a man and his family. In these latter chapters, the questions moves from how is God described, to what is God's relationship to his people?

It all begins with a promise of God (Covenant) to bless all the nations through Abraham and to make him a great nation. This promise goes all the way back to Genesis 3, and now we get to see how God is going to rescue and bless his rebellions world back to himself. This promise is going to keep reoccurring throughout the entire Bible and come up again in all sorts of ways.

It's a good thing that God is faithful to himself too! It turns out his people can be just as scared, deceptive, evil and rebellious as others. In fact, there's a spiral down from Abraham to Jacob.

Abraham denies knowing God and doesn't trust his promise of a son. Isaac tries to usurp God's promise by blessing the wrong child. Jacob lives up to his name (with means deceiver) and spends his entire life feuding, tricking and fleeing from his brother, Esau. Then, towards the end of his life Jacob keeps telling his kids that he loves Joseph more than the others, which leads to Joseph being sold as a slave and his brothers faking his death! What a dramatic family!

However, the stories in Genesis aren't there for us to copy. If we're honest, we are already like them anyway. Remember - these aren't stories of heroes to live up to or copy! The Old Testament is the story of a faithful God, and how people, like you and me, keep needing his grace and mercy.

Genesis 12-50 is the reminder that despite themselves, God is good on his promise. And good he is! Each December, we recall and remember the one person born in the family line of Abraham, who will fulfil God's promise to bring the blessing of belong to him to all people.

Genesis shows us not only to origin of who made us and why we exist, but it's the beginning of the promise that God see's though to Jesus - and whom will one day return to bring full restoration and the complete blessing of the garden back to a restored world.

It's my prayer that in all the up's and down's of these character, we'll appreciate God's faithfulness, be thankful that God won't give up on us, and appreciate Jesus that little bit more in the lead up to Christmas.

Luke Dahlenburg

SERIES OUTLINE

#	Date	Talk Title	Passage
1	Nov 12	Abraham	Genesis 11:27-12:9
2	Nov 19	Isaac	Genesis 27:1-41
3	Nov 26	Jacob	Genesis 32:22-32 & 35:1-15
	Dec 3	<i>Carols</i>	<i>Luke 2:4-14</i>
4	Dec 10	Joseph	Genesis 45:1-15 & 50:15-26

RESOURCES

Videos

Genesis 12-50: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/genesis-12-50/>

Blessing & Curse: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/blessing-and-curse/>

Articles

What Does the Bible Say About Blessing and Curse? <https://bibleproject.com/articles/how-does-the-bible-explain-suffering/>

What the Joseph Story is really about: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-joseph-story-really-about/>

TALK OVERVIEWS

Talk #1 - Genesis 11:27-12:9, Abraham

John Warner will be giving this talk about a life of faith.

Talk #2- Genesis 25:23 and Genesis 27:1-41, Isaac

Isaac has the shortest of the stories and it's rather non-eventful, in comparison to Abraham and Jacob. But, the most important part of his life is the promise of God - he is a child of promise and through him the promise passes down the generations. Except, he's more interested in trying to make the promised blessing work to his agenda and not God's. By now he's an old man, and not only blind with his eyes but blind in faith. God said Jacob would get the blessing, even as Isaac tries to give it to Esau. In this talk we will explore what the Biblical idea of blessing is (Hint: it goes back to Genesis 1:26-18) and how again and again, God's people seem to be the biggest obstacle God accomplishing his purpose in the world, but despite them selves, God will make sure the right thing will happen (The blessing) even if everyone has the wrong reasons for doing what they do. This story is a reminder of how God, our Father, would give up his first born son, to bless us with his presence and the hope of a new creation. And how this Jesus would come through Isaac.

Talk #3- Genesis 32:22-32 & Genesis 35:1-15, Jacob

The further we get From Abraham, the less and less promising it all looks. Jacob act's just like the snake in the garden as he tricks, lies and deceives for almost 40 years of his life. His name literally means, 'to grab the heel' which is an idiom for deception - like tripping someone up. When we find him in Genesis 32 God wrestles with him to show him that he's actually been wanting to bless him, if he'd only stop tricking, fighting and taking matters into his own hands and leave it up to God. Hence, the hitting him in the hip is a reminder that the blessing of Abraham will come by God's hand, not his loins. It's this limp that defines him and transforms his entire life, along with a new name to remind him of his wrestle with God and how often we too, struggle with God. In Genesis 35, Jacob finally releases that the God of his father and grand-father has been with him his entire life as God reminds him of the promise he's working in his family - that through them the one to crush the author of all deception and lies will finally be defeated.

Talk #4 - Genesis 45:1-15 & Genesis 50:15-26, Joseph

The Joseph story is the hinge between God's people living in Canaan and how they got to Egypt and grew into a huge nation and why they are no longer in the land of promise, but end up flourishing in a place called Goshin.

When we meet him in these chapters, he's reunited with his family, showing how God's still working to bring about the blessing through this family line and, how one person in the line of Abraham finally seems to understand the big picture God's working too - his life ending with the hope that God will rescue his people and bring them back to a land and keep fulfilling his promise. Joseph was the suffering servant, whom God used to bring about the safety and rescue of his people. His life is a lesson of how God's people will suffer and struggle, yet, what people mean for evil, as we have seen with the family line of Abraham, God will use for good. God doesn't save us from suffering, but through it. And even though Joseph isn't connected with Jesus in the New Testament, his story saves the way for the great suffering one that would come through his family line.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Begin by exploring the passage together, praying and then use the questions below.

Introduction

Share how God's word has impacted you over the last week and then read Sunday's up-coming passage together.

Ask the following questions of the text

Begin by working out a structure and a big ideas as a group and then ask:

1. What stands out for you from this passage?
2. What is difficult to understand from this passage?
3. How does this passage point forward to Jesus?
4. How might this passage shape how you live as a follower of Jesus in the coming week?

QUESTIONS

Talk #1 - Abraham

1. Read Genesis 1:27-28. What is the blessing of God to people? Read Genesis 12:1-3. What are the similarities? Who will do the blessing? *Note: Great in this context means multiplying and big, not awesome.*
2. In 12:3 what happens to people to join themselves to Abraham? Who is the blessing of Abraham for?

3. Read Genesis 15:2–6. At this point in time, how many children does Abraham have? Who will make sure the blessing comes to Abraham’s family?
4. Romans 4:19–25 helps us understand Abraham’s view of God. Importantly, Abraham had to keep learning to trust God in his life, but, when Paul looks back, what does he say Abraham was fully convinced of and in, Romans 4:21? What was the result of this conviction, Romans 4:22?
5. Ultimately, how does the blessing of Abraham come down to us, Romans 4:24–25? What do we do to have the blessing of knowing and belonging to God?
6. How might knowing this space your week and give you confidence in God?

Talk #2 - Isaac

1. What do you notice about the behaviour of all the people in this chapter? How would you describe the actions of Isaac, Jacob, Rebekah and Esau?
2. Read Genesis 25:23. What does this tell you about how Isaac was acting?
3. What’s the significance of passing down the blessing? Think back to Genesis 12:1–3 and God’s promise to Abraham.
4. Read 1 John 1:8–2:2 and consider as a group how different Isaac was as a father, to God our Father, who knows all our failings and yet, still works out his purpose for us, forgiving and blessing us in Jesus.

Talk #3 - Jacob

1. Re-cap from last week by reading Genesis 27:41. How would you feel, hearing that from your brother if you were Jacob?

Context: Jacob is a lying trickster! It’s now been 20 years since Jacob and Esau last saw each other. Esau is still angry and Jacob hasn’t change – he’s running from his father in law Laban who he tricked out of sheep and cattle. At this point in time, Esau is coming to meet Jacob with 400 men. Jacob is desperately afraid and splits his family and goods in half and sends a huge gift to appease his brother.

2. Why do you think Jacob wants a blessing from wrestling with this ‘man’ and what does it have to do with his father and grandfather?
3. The name Israel means, “The Lord fights” Why is that significant to change the name of the trickster Jacob to this?
4. What does the limp tell you about the wrestling act with God and Jacob and what would it be a reminder of to Jacob for the rest of his life?

5. How do you see Jacob's maturity and trust of God displayed in Genesis 35:1-15? How is Yahweh different to the household Gods that cannot be thrown away under a tree (35:4)?
6. How does Genesis 35:11-12 continue the promise God made to Abraham?
7. Jacob was a son not only according to the flesh but, more importantly, according to faith. Read Romans 4:13-16. How does that give you hope and confidence to follow God in the challenges of life or in what you might have to give up?

Talk #4 - Joseph

Context: Joseph's brothers sold him to slave traders and faked his death to his father. Yet, at the end of Genesis, there is a great family reunion as the brothers come from the land of Canaan looking for grain - little did they know they would find their brother and all the promises of God coming together for them!

1. In Genesis 45:1-15, describes Joseph's reaction to seeing his brothers. How does he view God's work in all this (45:6-8)? How does this promise look back to Genesis 3:15?
2. Read Genesis 37:4. How does this chapter change the family dynamics?
3. In Genesis 50 how does Joseph react to his brothers?
4. How does Joseph's death give the family hope (50:24-26)? How does Jesus' death give us hope for the future too?
5. Nowhere is Joseph connected with Jesus in the New Testament. However, there are parallels. Read Genesis 50:20 and consider how Jesus was used by God to bring about salvation of not just family of 72, but all who trust in him by faith. What does this mean for your own circumstances? See Romans 8:18-39 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.