

# GOD OF OUR FATHERS

## GENESIS

BY RIVERTREE CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

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## Course Description



This comprehensive Bible course provides an overview of the book of Genesis. Each lesson includes focus scriptures and related reading assignments. Assessments feature questions designed to engage a variety of cognitive skills. The Bible lessons in this course are nonsectarian and suitable for all Christians. The curriculum is ideal for both beginners and experienced learners seeking to deepen their biblical understanding.

### Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, learners should be able to:

- Demonstrate basic understanding of Bible structure.
- Utilize outside resources (i.e., dictionaries, commentaries, concordances, etc.) for gaining new insights.
- Identify key people, places, and things in the Bible.
- Analyze biblical contexts.
- Reflect critically on contemporary life in light of biblical principles.
- Implement strategies for change in contemporary life using biblical principles as a conceptual framework.

**Suggested General Lesson Plan Template**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
5 min.	Opening/Prayer
5 min.	Reviewing Background for Scripture
5-10 min.	Reading and Reacting to the Scripture
15-25 min.	Answer “Examining the Scripture” Questions
25-40 min.	Applied Scripture Activity
5 min.	Prayer requests/Closing prayer/Benediction
60-90 min.	TOTAL TIME

## GENESIS PART 1: CHAPTERS 1-11

### Lesson 1: The Creation



#### Lesson Introduction

- Describe a time when you created something from scratch.
- How did the creative process make you feel?
- How did you feel about your creation?
- What might your feelings suggest about God?

#### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Discuss the events of the creation
- Identify similarities and differences in the two creation stories
- Share ideas about the significance of rest (Sabbath)
- Analyze various meanings of “the breath of life.”
- Comment on the role of mankind in the Garden of Eden
- Express understanding of who God is

## **Background for the Scripture**

The story of creation is told in Genesis 1:1-2:25. These verses present two accounts of creation. The first is found in Genesis 1:1-2:3. This creation story describes the origin of the earth and shows how God systematically created order from chaos. Each creation event or phase follows the same general pattern that was established on day one: God issues a divine command, there is a result, which is followed by divine approval, and the event culminates with the enumeration of the day (Meeks, 1993, p. 6).

The second creation account is found in Genesis 2:4-17. According to some scholars, the second account provides a different viewpoint on creation. One scholar has noted: “The first account describes creation by a formula, which is repeated throughout the account. The second account takes a more problem-solving approach; something is missing or needed that God supplies” (Deffinbaugh, 2014). Also, in the second creation account, the characters talk to each other. This dialogue is absent from the first account; only God speaks.

## **Read Genesis 1:1-2:3 - The First Creation Account**

### **Examining the Scripture**

1. Who was present at the Creation?
2. What do you think was God's reason for creating things in a particular order?
3. Reflect on verse 1:12: "And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good." Share your thoughts on how this pattern continues to relate to the cycle of life.
4. In what verse(s) are we told that humankind was made in God's image?
5. What does it mean to be made in the likeness or image of God?
6. What is the significance of the seventh day?
7. Discuss the importance of rest in daily life.

## **Read Genesis 2:4-17 - The Second Creation Account**

### **Examining the Scripture**

1. What is the significance of God's directing humankind not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
2. What might be the various meanings of death in v. 17?
3. In Genesis 1:28, God tells humankind to be fruitful and multiply and to have "dominion" over the living creatures. How does dominion over creation manifest in modern times?
4. What does having dominion demand of us in the present day?
5. Discuss the idea that people of all races, classes, genders, and sexual orientations are made in the image of God. How might this insight influence our treatment of others?

### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 2: Adam and Eve



### Lesson Introduction

- Describe your thoughts about the institution of marriage.
- Explore your understanding of humans and their relationship with other living beings.

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Explore relationships among living things
- Identify the major differences between the two accounts of how females were created
- Describe how the creation stories relate to male/female relationships
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

Up to this point in the Creation story, everything God has done was declared to be “good.” However, in Genesis 2:18, the second creation account, God determines that it is not good for man to be alone. And so, a helper for the man is made from Adam’s rib, according to the second creation account.

As you read the two accounts of how females were created (Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:21-22), note the major differences in the accounts and try to identify major themes and patterns in each story. Try to draw generalizations about the intellect of humankind, power relationships, human relationships, and marriage. Be ready to compare and contrast what occurred in the Garden to human situations and characteristics in the present day.

## **Read Genesis 2:18-25**

### **Examining the Scripture**

1. What does Adam's naming of the animals indicate about his intellect and ability?
2. What does this scripture suggest about humans and their relationships with other living things?
3. Compare the two accounts of how females were created (Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:21-22). What are the major differences in the accounts? What are the basic themes in these two accounts?
4. Discuss the implications of verse 25: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

### **Background for the Scripture**

#### **Sabbath Rest**

On the seventh day God rested. We might view this as an indication that recovery and restoration are essential components of sustained life. Although the mind, body, and spirit are linked in complex ways, restoration could simply mean giving our bodies time to replenish through sleep, play, amusement, or relaxation (Reed, 2009). Vitality, tranquility, and peacefulness might just be the result.

#### **Marriage and Family**

According to one source, this passage from the second chapter of Genesis (vv. 23-24) "represents the foundation upon which the entire Christian philosophy of marriage and the family is built" (African American Lectionary, 2015). The lectionary writers conclude: God discerned that even though Adam had his creator and other creatures in his company, without a woman, mankind was alone, and that was not good (v. 18). That's when God sought to fashion a peer, a suitable helper, for the man (v. 19-20).

As you think about how this scripture pertains to marriage, consider these questions: How are modern-day ideas about the institution of marriage the same as those implied during the creation? How do ideas about marriage differ today? Your

answers will vary, of course, but some of the ideas below may emerge from your discussion and reflection:

- In the eyes of the church, marriage is a sacred covenant.
- Civil unions are different from the sacred institution of marriage.
- Although Jesus did not condone divorce, Moses allowed it.
- Marriage is about mutual respect in the relationship.
- The institution of marriage was part of God's original plan.

### **Examining the Scripture**

1. Read the following statement: "Our life and worth come from God's breath of life or God's Spirit." Reflect on and evaluate this statement.
2. Think about places in creation where you have encountered God's presence. Describe the place. How were you affected?

### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 3: The Fall



### Lesson Introduction

- Have you ever knowingly disobeyed a command or directive?
- What were your thoughts when you made your decision?
- What were the consequences of your decision?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Describe the motives and characteristics of the serpent in the Garden of Eden
- Reflect on the meaning of “death” after eating the forbidden fruit
- Describe changes in the behavior of Adam and Eve as a result of their disobedience
- Discuss the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

Many readers of the Bible would agree that humanity's “very good” state deteriorated when it was tempted to doubt God's words. At least one scholar has indicated that yielding to this temptation of disobedience brought on spiritual death for the inhabitants of the Garden (Benware, 1993, p. 34). Other sources have cited

The Fall as being one of the most significant events in the life of humankind, indicating that disobedience rests at the heart of the human fall from grace.

In the Garden, those who were created by God substituted their own judgment for that of the Creator. “This sense of pride underlies the appeal of the serpent to the woman when he tells her that if she eats of the forbidden fruit, she will ‘be like God, knowing good and evil’” (3:5) (Tulloch, 1997, p. 41). Before the woman can ask questions or adequately deliberate her choices, she falls for the serpent’s arguments and ends up suffering from the consequences.

The serpent in this account, also known as “the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (Rev 12:9), tempts the man and the woman, and the consequences are far-reaching (Collins, 2004, p. 70). This story conveys the earliest experiences of shame, guilt, and suffering in humankind.

### **Read Genesis 3:1-24 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. The serpent is depicted as a tempter. Identify details from the scripture that substantiate this description.
2. What are the possible meanings of “death” in vv. 3-5?
3. Why did Adam and Eve hide themselves from God in verse 8?
4. Evaluate vv. 12-14 and share your thoughts about that passage.
5. What were the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sinning in the Garden?
6. Based on your previous knowledge of the Bible, where else does the serpent appear, and what does the serpent represent? Use a concordance or a Bible dictionary to support your answer.
7. How is the concept of the “tempter” still a factor in our spiritual deliberations in the present day?

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 4: Cain and Abel



### Lesson Introduction

- If you have a sibling, describe a situation in which you and your sibling disagreed.
- How was the matter resolved?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Identify differences between Cain and Abel
- Describe the consequences of Cain's sin
- Describe ways in which God protected Cain
- Discuss the implications of being one's "brother's keeper."
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

After Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, they had two sons, Cain and Abel. Genesis chapter 4 gives the account of the first murder, as Cain slew his brother Abel because of God's rejection of Cain's sacrifice. Although the Bible is silent on why Cain's sacrifice was not pleasing to God, at least one source has noted,

“It seems reasonable to infer from subsequent developments that God had made known what kind of sacrifice was required, and that Cain acted contrary to those instructions” (Schultz, 2006, p. 10).

Several important points emerge as this story unfolds. First, Abel values his personal sense of revenge more than he values life (Tulloch, 1997, p. 39). Second, a division takes place between the godly and the ungodly (Benware, 1993, p. 34). And, finally, themes of sibling rivalry appear along with dissension between farmer and shepherd (Collins, 2004, p. 8). These themes can be found throughout the Old Testament; they are initiated in Genesis.

### **Read Genesis 4:1-16 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. Typically, pairs of brothers found in Genesis feature siblings with opposing characteristics. Identify ways in which Cain and Abel are different from one another.
2. What were the consequences of Cain’s sin?
3. In what ways did God protect Cain?
4. In what ways are shepherds and farmers in opposition to each other? How, if at all, is this opposition apparent in the present day?
5. What does the job of being “my brother’s keeper” involve in the present day?

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 5: The Flood and Its Aftermath



### Lesson Introduction

- Imagine that you are one of the survivors after the world, as you know it, has been destroyed.
- How would you feel?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Discuss details of the flood and its aftermath
- Describe the implications of God’s command to Noah after the flood had subsided
- Identify the covenant God made to Noah after the flood
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

Chapters 5-7 act as a transition between the era of Adam and that of Noah. By the time of Noah, humankind had declined to the point that the world known to Adam’s descendants had become completely depraved. As evidence of this, the Bible relates the story of marriage occurring between “sons of God” and “daughters of men” (6:1-4). The biblical text states, “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in

the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (6:5). Grieved that God had made humankind (6:7), God decided to destroy the world with a flood (6:17) that engulfed the whole earth. The destruction, however, was not total, for verse 8 says, “Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” God established a covenant with Noah and directed him to build an ark:

But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. (6:18-20)

We are told that Noah was 600 years old when “the windows of heaven were opened” (7:11). Torrential rain continued for forty days and forty nights (v. 12). The day the rains commenced, Noah and his wife, along with their sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth and the three wives of his sons, entered the ark. The account tells us that those who entered the ark also included:

every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in. (vv. 14-16)

In verses 23-24, the story continues:

And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

We pick up the story in chapter 8, after the floodwaters have begun to subside.

## **Read Genesis 8**

### **Examining the Scripture**

1. Where is Mt. Ararat? Use a Bible Atlas to locate it.
2. What types of birds did Noah send to detect whether or not dry land had started to appear? What are the differences between the two birds?
3. What was God’s command to Noah in verses 16 and 17? Why is this significant?

4. What was Noah's first act upon dry land after leaving the ark?
5. What covenant did God make with Noah?
6. Discuss the significance of the dove and the olive leaf in the present day.
7. Read Genesis 9. Describe the terms of God's covenant with Noah. What are some of the present-day remnants of this covenant?

### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 6: Tower of Babel



### Lesson Introduction

- Why would God apparently destroy the unity of humanity by scattering people?
- Why would the Bible portray God as bringing disharmony into a world that apparently was unified and working together for a common goal?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Discuss the Tower of Babel
- Determine if language impedes effective communication
- Identify the sins committed at the Tower of Babel
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

The Tower of Babel is described in Genesis 11:1-9. After the Flood, God commanded humanity to “increase in number and fill the earth” (v. 1). Humanity decided to do the exact opposite. They decided to stay where they were and build a gigantic tower as a symbol of their power, to make a name for themselves (v. 4).

The Babel story has been labeled an allegorical tale about the separation of

languages and the people described in chapter 10 of the book of Genesis. The editors of the *Harper-Collins Study Bible* have indicated that, like the Garden of Eden story, this story is a folktale of human pride and folly (Meeks, 1993, p. 18).

### **Read Genesis 11:1-9 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. What was the reason cited in scripture for why the people wanted to build a tower?
2. How does the writer of this passage depict God? How does this depiction differ from what you have been taught to believe about God?
3. Why did speaking different languages prevent the people from building the city and tower?
4. What sins were committed at the Tower of Babel?
5. How do you think the issue of language confusion exists today?
6. Reflect on the statement: “Even when we try to be united, if the basis of that unity is only ourselves and our own ambitions and goals, we will find that we cannot even communicate adequately.” What modern-day parallels can we discuss based on the writer’s assertion?

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## PART II: THE PATRIARCHS

### Lesson 7: Abraham



#### Lesson Introduction

- What does the word *blessing* imply to you?
- What is involved in having a “covenant” relationship?
- What are the consequences for breaking a covenant?

#### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Describe the calling of Abram
- Identify the major episodes in the life of Abraham
- Discuss the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah
- Discuss the significance of the circumcision of Abraham
- Describe provisions of God’s covenant with Abraham
- Express understanding of who God is

#### Background for the Scripture

Genesis 12-50 tells stories about Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham, and

his descendants as they move from Haran into the land of Canaan. These areas are part of what we know as Mesopotamia. It is believed these stories began as oral traditions passed down within the tribes long before they became part of the written record.

As we will see, God had promised Abram that he would become the father of a great nation. Only a few years later, however, God tested Abraham's faith by telling Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Abraham believed that Isaac was God's chosen recipient of the covenant, and he was confused by God's request. Trying to sort things out, Abraham drew all manner of conclusions. At first, he thought that God would have to raise Isaac from the dead since he was the one and only covenant son. Abraham complied with God's directive, and God honored Abraham for this act of faith. At the same time, God also provided the sacrifice on that occasion (Benware, 1993, p. 48).

These chapters include accounts of Abram's journeys. According to one source:

The people are portrayed as very human with all their faults and strengths - they lie, deceive, steal, test God, they have courage, journey into the unknown, seek God, question God and are obedient. (Old Testament Lectionary, 2015)

The stories are rich with details about doubt and deception, war and tribulations and the beginnings of a great nation. Today, Abraham is a revered figure in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

### **Read Genesis 12:1-20 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. How old was Abram when he departed from Haran?
2. What were the 3 major promises God made to Abram?
3. Why does Abraham introduce Sarai as his sister to everyone?
4. What does God tell Abram to do? How easy is it to leave one's comfort zone?
5. Discuss Abram's faith as he sets out toward an unknown future.
6. Describe a situation in which you have stepped out on faith.

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 8: Abraham and Lot



### Lesson Introduction

- Describe a relationship in which you typically took the back seat.
- How did you feel about the relationship?
- How was the situation resolved eventually?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Describe some of Lot's major characteristics
- Examine the relationship between Lot and Abraham
- Discuss the significance of Lot in the biblical account
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

We discovered in Genesis 11:27-28 that Abraham was the head of an extended family, which included his nephew Lot, the son of Haran. Both Abraham and Lot were grazers whose herds grew after the family settled in the Negev (Tullock, 1997, p. 46). The conflict between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot grew over time; that's when uncle and nephew decided to part ways. Abraham settled the matter by

giving Lot first choice of the land. Lot decided to move his household and his herds to the Jordan Valley near Sodom; Abraham settled in the hills.

Metzger and Coogan reported: “Throughout these stories, Lot is portrayed as a less than heroic figure, who has no respect in his own family, is hesitant, and is tricked by his daughters” (Metzger & Coogan, 1993, p. 467). Another source reports that, in this text, Abraham’s foresight stands in contrast to Lot’s shortsightedness (Meeks, 1993, p. 21). Yet, Abraham maintained his concern for Lot throughout their relationship together, as evidenced by Abraham’s rescue of Lot following his capture during a time of war.

### **Read Genesis 13 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. Who was Lot? Describe some of his major characteristics.
2. What were some of the reasons that Lot and Abraham went their separate ways?
3. Reflect on this statement: It has been suggested that Abraham did not begin to move forward until he cut ties with Lot.
4. Evaluate the statement above and find evidence in the scripture to support your position.

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 9: God's Covenant with Abraham



### Lesson Introduction

- Think about a time you had a contract with another person.
- What were the terms of the contract?
- What were the consequences of breaking the contract?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Discuss the significance of God changing Abram's name
- Describe the terms of the covenant between God and Abraham
- Explain the importance of circumcision
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

In the ancient Near East during the time of Abraham, covenants were common among men and among nations. Three major promises are contained in the covenant God made with Abram: a land, a seed, and a blessing.

At Shechem, God promised to give 'land' to Abram (12:7). Even so, the land

that was promised never belonged to Abram in his lifetime. When his wife died, Abram had to buy a portion of the land for a burial site (23:3). It is not until chapter 15 that a full description of the land was given: “On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates’ ” (Genesis 15:18).

The second promise of the Abrahamic Covenant was that of a great nation coming through Abram’s seed, which was to be a major component of Abraham’s blessing. Descendants formed the basis of the ‘great name’ that God would give to Abram (12:2). This promise demanded Abram’s faith, for it was obvious that he was already old and that his wife appeared incapable of having children (11:30).

The final promise was that of blessing: blessing for him, and blessing through him (12:2). Much of Abram’s blessing, as we have already noted, was to come in the form of his offspring. But there was also the blessing that would come in the form of the Messiah, who would eventually bring salvation to God’s people (John 8:56).

### **Read Genesis 17:1-22 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. What was the significance of God’s changing Abram’s name?
2. What were the terms of the covenant between God and Abraham?
3. What is the importance of circumcision?
4. The covenant between Abraham and God is described in the following passages: Genesis 12:1-3, 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17: 1-22, and 22:15-18. How do these accounts differ? How are they the same?
5. Using a Bible dictionary as a resource, describe the following covenants: The Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant. In what ways are these covenants the same? How are they different?
6. What blessings and curses, if any, are associated with the above covenant relationships?

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 10: Sodom and Gomorrah



### Lesson Introduction

- Describe a time when you negotiated with someone to change a situation.
- Why did you feel it was important to bargain?
- How did you feel during the negotiations?
- What was the outcome?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Describe the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah
- Explain why God was displeased with the inhabitants
- Discuss Abraham's persistence in negotiating with God
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

Genesis 14:1-16 recounts how the inhabitants of Sodom and their neighbors fought against the King of Elam and his allies. Abraham's nephew Lot, who lived in Sodom at the time, was taken prisoner. Hearing that Lot had been captured, Abraham

marshaled his men and pursued his nephew's captors. Abraham subsequently rescued Lot and brought back all his goods. Shortly after this battle, Abraham met King Melchizedek of Salem and paid tribute to him with ten percent of the booty.

Genesis 19 describes the depravity of Sodom. God completely destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone (Genesis 19:24-25) because of their unrepentant wickedness. This destruction was carried out in spite of Abraham's efforts to negotiate with God to save the city. Scholars have said, "Sodom is remembered as a wicked city that brought divine wrath" upon itself. Genesis 9:1-11 provides examples of "attempted sexual perversity" and "gross inhospitality" taking place in and around the city (Achtmeier, 1996, p. 1046).

### **Read Genesis 18 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. Why was God displeased with the inhabitants of Sodom?
2. What does Abraham's persistence in negotiating with God say about Abraham?
3. What does God's willingness to negotiate say about God?
4. Using a Bible concordance as a resource, describe other examples in which God changed God's mind about a situation in the Bible.

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 11: Hagar and Ishmael



### Lesson Introduction

- Describe a situation in which tension existed between members of a blended family.
- What did family members do to keep the peace?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Discuss the importance of the Hagar and Ishmael story
- Describe God's relationship with Hagar
- Explain how God intervened for Hagar and Ishmael in the desert
- Discuss resilience as demonstrated in the story
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

When Abraham was 75 and Sarah 65, the couple first arrived in Canaan. Ten years prior to their arrival, they had received the promise of parenthood. Because God's promise had not yet been fulfilled as expected, Sarah decided to solve the problem

on her own. She urged Abraham to resort to a custom of the time. Sarah gave her personal handmaid, Hagar, to Abraham as a concubine. A son was born to Hagar and Abraham. They named the child Ishmael.

In a commentary about this passage of scripture, Kathryn Schifferdecker (2015) noted that Abraham eventually had two sons, one of whom was born of a slave woman and “the second, a miracle child, is born to them in their old age against all odds.” She indicated that after Isaac was old enough to be weaned, Abraham threw a party to celebrate the occasion. But Sarah was not happy about the arrangement (Genesis 21:9-10):

Sarah does not want to see this son of a slave woman, this reminder of her own long sorrow, to inherit along with her son. Her disdain for Hagar and Ishmael are apparent in the way she refers to them: “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.” (21:10). Schifferdecker (2015)

God had directed Abraham to do whatever Sarah wanted and reassured Abraham that both Isaac and Ishmael would be the fathers of great nations. So, Hagar was banished to the wilderness. However, that was not the end of the story for this slave woman and her son.

### **Read Genesis 21:8-21 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. What evidence is given that tension existed between Sarah and Hagar?
2. What does scripture imply about God’s relationship with Hagar?
3. How did God intervene for Hagar and Ishmael in the desert?
4. What does this story teach us about resilience and hope for people who have been abandoned in a proverbial “wilderness”?
5. In what ways, if any, might Hagar be considered a victim of domestic violence?

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 12: Testing of Abraham's Faith



### Lesson Introduction

- Have you ever had to make a decision you were uncomfortable about?
- What did you do to resolve the situation?

### Lesson Objectives

- Discuss the story of Abraham's near sacrifice of his son, Isaac
- Evaluate Abraham's attempt to sacrifice his son in light of his faith
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

In Genesis 22, God puts Abraham to an extreme test of faith. When Isaac had reached his early teens, God told Abraham to offer up his son as a burnt offering (Gen. 22:2). According to one commentary, the following questions probably emerged:

Even though Abraham had been accustomed to human sacrifice in his pagan life in Ur, how could this possibly fit into God's plan? What was to happen to all the promises that depended on Isaac? (Walvoord.com , 2014).

At least one scholarly treatise has noted that this story of near-sacrifice is important in Christianity, as it represents a “type” of Christ's sacrifice (Metzger & Coogan, 1993, p. 325).

**Read Genesis 22:1-19 (KJV)**

**Examining the Scripture**

1. React to and evaluate the story of Abraham's near sacrifice of his son, Isaac.
2. Why is this story significant?
3. Review what at least one Bible commentary has to say about this story.
4. Discuss Abraham's attempt to sacrifice his son in light of present-day values.
5. How might views of Abraham's attempt be viewed differently today?

**Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 13: Isaac Meets and Marries Rebekah



### Lesson Introduction

- Have you ever waited so long for something that was promised that you wanted to give up?
- How did it feel to wait?
- What did you do or think when the thing that was promised finally arrived?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Describe Abraham's efforts to find a wife for Isaac
- Discuss the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

Sarah bore Isaac when she was 90 years old, and Abraham was 100. It was important to Abraham that his son not marry a Canaanite woman because Isaac was the child of the covenant. Therefore, he sent one of his trusted servants to Haran to find a wife for this young man. Chapter 24 tells in detail the story of how Isaac came to marry

Rebekah.

Isaac receives the least attention of all the patriarchs in the Bible. Nevertheless, he played an integral part in populating the great nation foretold by God. His story is brief, with details unfolding in chapters 22-26 of Genesis.

**Read Genesis 24:15-41, 58-64 (KJV)**

**Examining the Scripture**

1. Why was it so important to Abraham that Isaac not take a wife from among the Canaanites?
2. Describe some of Rebekah's characteristics.
3. Summarize the story of how the servant came to recognize Rebekah as the right bride for Isaac.
4. Use a Bible dictionary to look up Laban. Who was Laban and why is he important in the story of the patriarchs?
5. Using a Bible dictionary as a resource, describe how Rebekah is related to her kinsman Abraham.

**Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 14: Jacob Steals Esau's Blessing



### Lesson Introduction

- Describe ways in which deception was used in the story of Jacob.
- Has anyone ever deceived you? How did you feel?

### Lesson Objectives

- Identify differences between Jacob and Esau
- Discuss the characteristics of Jacob
- Explain how Jacob deceives his father
- Discuss how Rebekah shows preferential treatment for Jacob
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

After 20 years of attempting to begin their family, Isaac and Rebekah finally had twins and named them Jacob and Esau (25:19-34). Esau, being born first, possessed the birthright, which conferred many benefits in his day. Benefits included such things as having precedence over the other children, “receiving a double share of the inheritance, and becoming head of the clan at the father’s death” (Benware, 1993, p. 48). Even so, benefits could be lost as a result of an offense. Benefits could also be

traded or negated by the father's last will, which in those days was called the blessing. This blessing announced by the father was legally binding. In this story, Jacob stole Esau's blessing through an act of deception. Enmity grew between the two brothers. Details of Jacob's life are found in Genesis 25-36.

### **Read Genesis 27:1-41 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. Jacob has been called a trickster. Provide evidence from the scripture to support this designation.
2. How did Jacob deceive his blind father?
3. In what ways did Rebekah show preferential treatment for Jacob?
4. What are the implications of losing one's birthright?
5. Give examples of how and when loss of a birthright occurs in the present day.
6. What are the implications of parents giving preferential treatment to their children in the present day?

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 15: Jacob Wrestles with God



### Lesson Introduction

- Describe a situation in which you struggled to come to a resolution about something.
- How did that struggle change you?
- What does it mean to walk with a “limp” in a metaphorical sense?

### Lesson Objectives

- Describe Jacob’s encounter with God at Jabbok
- Discuss how the encounter changed Jacob
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

As we have seen earlier, enmity existed between Jacob and Esau. To avoid Esau’s wrath, Jacob fled to Haran to stay with Laban, his uncle. During his 20 years in Haran, and through a series of schemes and other circumstances, Jacob acquired a great deal of wealth and a large family that included two wives, two concubines, and eleven sons (Genesis 28:1-31:55). After being released from his obligations to Laban, Jacob returned to Canaan, where a twelfth son was born to him. These twelve

sons form the foundation of the new nation God had promised Abraham.

Upon his return to Canaan from Haran, Jacob rested near the banks of the Jabbok River. There he encountered a strange man with whom he wrestled until daybreak. Gregg (2015) pointed out that the “Bible doesn’t record the blow-by-blow details, but it probably wasn’t like the wrestling we’re used to seeing.” Though they wrestled vigorously and persistently, the man did not prevail against Jacob. That’s when the man struck Jacob on the hip socket, throwing it out of joint. In spite of sustaining such a serious injury Jacob did not give up, saying he would let go only if the man would bless him (Gen 32:26). Gregg (2015) noted, “Jacob perceives his opponent as someone capable of blessing him is the strongest indication yet that this is no ordinary wrestling partner.” As it turns out, Jacob had spent the night wrestling with God.

The story of Jacob includes many sub-plots. Discussion of these stories is beyond the scope of this lesson, but in your reading of Genesis you should become familiar with some of the accounts listed below:

- Jacob and Esau Meet: Genesis 33:1-17
- Rape of Dinah: Genesis 34:1-24
- Dinah’s Brothers Avenge Their Sister: Genesis 34:25-31
- Jacob Returns to Bethel: Genesis 35:1-15
- Birth of Benjamin and Death of Rachel: Genesis 35:16-26

### **Read Genesis 32:11, 22-32 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. Who was the person with whom Jacob wrestled? How do we know?
2. What might it mean that Jacob “prevailed” in his wrestling match with God?
3. What is the significance of Jacob’s name being changed?
4. Reflect on this statement made by one theologian: “The God who wrestles with us in the mess of our lives and leaves us ‘limping, but blessed’ is good news for us today.”
5. In what ways do we wrestle with God today?

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 16: Joseph Sold Into Slavery



### Lesson Introduction

- Have you ever been the object of jealousy?
- How did it make you feel?
- What did you do to resolve your feelings?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Explain the reasons Joseph went to Egypt
- Discuss Joseph's treatment of his brothers
- Explain why Joseph's story is important
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

In many meaningful ways, the story of Joseph tells us “how Israel wound up in Egypt,” according to Ralph W. Klein (2015). Although Joseph is not a patriarch in the same sense as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his story sets the stage for God's movement in the lives of these people of the covenant and their eventual liberation

from bondage. One commentary says Joseph

is the first offspring of Jacob to experience slavery in Egypt, and his dazzling rise to power in his adopted country and his poignant reunion with his brothers and aged father enact a drama of divine providence that ties together all the themes and concerns of Genesis. (Meeks, 1993, p. 55, note for Genesis 37:1-50:26)

We are reminded that even though the Joseph story does not contain explicit divine intervention, in hindsight, “Joseph can detect clearly the hand of God” (Klein, 2015). See, for example, the scripture that says, “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today” (50:20).

### **Read Genesis 37:2-28 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. Describe Joseph’s boyhood interactions with his brothers.
2. What specific actions influenced the brothers to resent Joseph?
3. How did favoritism affect the relationships between Joseph and his brothers?
4. Use a Bible dictionary to obtain information about the Ishmaelites and Midianites.
5. Why were these two groups significant in the story of Genesis?

#### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Lesson 17: Joseph and His Brothers



### Lesson Introduction

- Think about a time when someone hurt you.
- What insights did you gain about your own capacity to forgive?

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Describe how the story of Joseph differs from other accounts about the patriarchs
- Discuss the broader reason Joseph went to Egypt
- Discuss Joseph’s treatment of his brothers
- Express understanding of who God is

### Background for the Scripture

One scholar has noted that the story of Joseph centers on “family strife, forgiveness, reconciliation, providence, provision, and humility” (Russaw, 2014). In Genesis 45:1-15, Joseph finally identifies himself to his brothers and begins to take steps to restore their relationship. Russaw reports that in the fifth verse,

After identifying himself as their long-lost brother, Joseph tells Jacob’s sons,

“And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.” Joseph proactively acknowledges that The Divine positioned him to save the lives of others. (Russaw, 2014)

According to one scholar, as Genesis ends, the nation “has no land, no law, and only seventy-five people” (Benware, 1993, p. 50). Yet God’s promise to Abraham to make him “a great nation” resonates with us, for we have come to know God as a promise keeper.

The story of Joseph is lengthy. This Bible study volume includes only a small portion of this rich saga. I urge you to read some of the other stories about Joseph that warrant a closer look:

- Joseph Dreams of Greatness: Genesis 37:1-11
- Joseph Sold by His Brothers: Genesis 37:12-36
- Judah and Tamar: Genesis 38:1-30
- Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife: Genesis 39:1-23
- Dreams of Two Prisoners: Genesis 40:1-23
- Joseph Interprets Pharaoh’s Dream: Genesis 41:1-36
- Joseph’s Rise to Power: Genesis 41:37-57
- Joseph’s Brothers Go to Egypt: Genesis 42:1-25
- Joseph’s Brothers Return to Canaan: Genesis 42:26-38
- Brothers Bring Benjamin to Joseph: Genesis 43:1-34
- Joseph Detains Benjamin: Genesis 44:1-17
- Judah Pleads for Benjamin’s Release: Genesis 44:18-34
- Joseph Reveals Himself: Genesis 45:1-28
- Jacob Brings Whole Family to Egypt: Genesis 46:1-34
- Famine in Egypt: Genesis 47:13-26
- Last Days of Jacob: Genesis 47:27-31
- Jacob Blesses Joseph’s Sons: Genesis 48:1-22
- Joseph Forgives His Brothers: Genesis 50:15-21

### **Read Genesis 45 (KJV)**

#### **Examining the Scripture**

1. How does the story of Joseph differ from the other accounts about the patriarchs?
2. What does Joseph tell his brothers about the reason he went to Egypt? (v. 5). What does this statement suggest about God?
3. Discuss a possible explanation for Joseph’s treatment of his brothers once he held the advantage over them.
4. Reflect on this statement by Klein: “We may not experience miraculous

interventions by God into our lives, but often we can look back over the years and see God's secret providential hand" (Klein, 2015).

5. What are your thoughts and reactions to this statement?

### **Quest to Know God Activity**

1. What does this scriptural account reveal about God?
2. List two or three characteristics you discerned about God as you went through this lesson.
3. What statement can you make about the God of our fathers that you can pass down to future generations?

## Summary of Genesis

God spoke and it was created. So, it is conveyed in the book of Genesis, a story of how it all began. In Genesis, we studied a succession of famous “firsts” (Benware, 1993). Genesis chronicles how God created a world out of chaos and populated it with living things, commanding them to be fruitful and multiply. The works that God created were pronounced to be “very good” -- in spite of the fact that humankind succumbed to temptation and became separated from God in the Garden of Eden. Having sinned and fallen from unity with the One who is perfect and eternal, humans became vulnerable to sin and death and found themselves in a constant quest to reconcile with God.

Genesis also recorded the progression of our relationships with God and with each other. It revealed the first human birth, the first murder, and the first covenant God made with humankind. It traced that covenant through the lineage of Abraham, God's chosen servant.

The book is rich with stories of hope and despair. Though the stories are ancient, the book of Genesis describes plots and circumstances that recur even today. Furthermore, the stories in Genesis are well known. They lay the foundation for our faith. Through them, we learn about the nature of God and of humans, and about God's abiding love and grace.

In these lessons, we have learned more about the God of our Fathers. Doing so has helped us understand further the relationship between past and present. As we've studied these lessons, we have also begun to discern God's intricate plan that stretches from everlasting to everlasting. My prayer is that, in doing so, all of us have gained more knowledge about and intimacy with the God of our Fathers.

### Wrap-up Questions

1. What are your favorite stories from the book of Genesis?
2. How do the messages of the Bible stories relate to our lives in the present day?
3. In what specific ways have you attempted to convey these stories to generations that follow you?
4. What can we tell our children about the God of our Fathers?

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