

GENESIS

Seeing Jesus in the Beginning

A 13-Session Middle School Bible Study

Quoting the New King James Version (NKJV)

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Each session includes: a teacher's guide with teaching outline, historical/cultural background notes, and discussion questions; a one-page student handout; and a companion PowerPoint slide deck.

SESSION 1

In the Beginning

Genesis 1-2

"So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

— Genesis 1:27 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God created everything out of nothing, made people in His own image to know Him, and rested on the seventh day - showing us that real rest and real life are found in Him.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Hold up a phone or a painting and ask: 'Who made this, and how do you know?' Everything made points to a maker. Ask students what they think is the most amazing thing they've ever seen in creation.

Key People in This Session

- God (Elohim) — The Creator who speaks the universe into being
- Adam — The first man, formed from the dust, given the breath of life
- Eve — The first woman, formed from Adam's side to be his helper and partner

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. God Speaks the World into Being (Gen 1:1-25)

Six days, six sets of God simply speaking - 'Let there be...' - and it is so. Unlike the false gods of the ancient world, the one true God needs no help and no material to work with. He creates ex nihilo, out of nothing, by the sheer power of His word. This is the same 'Word' John tells us was with God and was God, through whom all things were made (John 1:1-3).

2. Made in His Image (Gen 1:26-31)

Of everything God made, only people are made 'in the image of God' - able to think, love, create, and relate to Him personally. This gives every human being, of every age, size, and background, incredible worth. God saw everything He had made and called it 'very good.'

3. The Seventh Day Rest (Gen 2:1-3)

God rested not because He was tired, but to establish a pattern - a rhythm of work and rest that He built into creation itself. This day pointed forward to a greater rest found only in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:9-10).

4. The Garden and the Two Trees (Gen 2:8-25)

God places Adam in Eden with meaningful work, a clear command, and the gift of Eve as his companion. The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil set up the choice that comes in chapter 3.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

John opens his Gospel by echoing Genesis 1: 'In the beginning was the Word... All things were made through Him' (John 1:1-3). Jesus is the Creator who spoke light into darkness, and He is also our true Sabbath rest - the One in whom weary souls find peace (Matthew 11:28-29). Colossians 1:16 tells us all things were created through Him and for Him.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

The ancient Near East was full of creation myths (like the Babylonian Enuma Elish) where the world is formed out of violent conflict between rival gods, and humans are created as an afterthought - slaves to serve the gods' needs. Genesis 1 stands in sharp, deliberate contrast: one God, sovereign and unopposed, speaks in ordered, purposeful days, and makes humanity the crown of His creation, given dignity and a job (to rule and steward the earth) rather than servitude. The Hebrew word for 'day' (yom) and the literary structure of six days building toward a climactic seventh reflect a carefully ordered piece of theology, not a scientific treatise. 'Adam' (adam) is a wordplay on 'ground' (adamah) - man is formed from the earth he is meant to tend. Middle schoolers may bring questions about science and Genesis; be ready to say honestly that godly, Bible-believing Christians hold different views on the details, but every view affirms that God alone is Creator and that this truth is the anchor point, not a distraction from it.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- What does it mean that you are made 'in the image of God'? How should that change the way you treat yourself and others?
- Why do you think God rested on the seventh day if He wasn't tired?
- What is one thing in creation that makes you say 'wow, God made that'?
- How is Jesus connected to creation, according to John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:16?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

After learning that you are made in the image of God, what do you think that means about your worth and purpose?

Feel

How do you feel knowing that the God who spoke galaxies into existence also made you on purpose?

Do

What is one way this week you can treat someone else as a valuable image-bearer of God?

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In the Beginning

Genesis 1-2

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— Genesis 1:27 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God created everything out of nothing, made people in His own image to know Him, and rested on the seventh day - showing us that real rest and real life are found in Him.

Key People

- God (Elohim) — The Creator who speaks the universe into being
- Adam — The first man, formed from the dust, given the breath of life
- Eve — The first woman, formed from Adam's side to be his helper and partner

Talk About It

- What does it mean that you are made 'in the image of God'? How should that change the way you treat yourself and others?
- Why do you think God rested on the seventh day if He wasn't tired?
- What is one thing in creation that makes you say 'wow, God made that'?

Memory Verse

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." — Genesis 1:1 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: After learning that you are made in the image of God, what do you think that means about your worth and purpose?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that the God who spoke galaxies into existence also made you on purpose?

DO: What is one way this week you can treat someone else as a valuable image-bearer of God?

SESSION 2

The Fall and the First Promise

Genesis 3

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

— Genesis 3:15 (NKJV)

Big Idea

Sin broke everything - our relationship with God, each other, and creation - but right there in the middle of judgment, God promised a Savior who would crush the serpent.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Show students a cracked phone screen or a broken toy. Ask: 'Can you fix this yourself?' Sometimes things break in a way we can't undo on our own - that's exactly what happened to the whole world in Genesis 3.

Key People in This Session

- The Serpent — Satan in disguise, who tempts by twisting God's word
- Eve — Deceived by the serpent, she eats the forbidden fruit
- Adam — Sins with his eyes wide open, plunging humanity into sin

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. The Temptation (Gen 3:1-6)

The serpent's strategy hasn't changed: question God's word ('Has God indeed said...?'), deny His warning ('You will not surely die'), and twist His motive (God is holding out on you). Eve and Adam choose to trust their own judgment over God's clear command.

2. The Fall's Damage (Gen 3:7-13)

Immediately, shame, fear, and blame enter the world. Adam blames Eve (and even God - 'the woman You gave me'); Eve blames the serpent. Sin always breaks relationships - with God and with each other.

3. The Curse and the Promise (Gen 3:14-19)

God pronounces real consequences on the serpent, the woman, the man, and the ground. But hidden inside the curse on the serpent is the first gospel promise (the protoevangelium): a coming 'seed' of the woman who will crush the serpent's head, though it will cost Him a wound.

4. Grace in the Garden (Gen 3:20-24)

God clothes Adam and Eve with animal skins - the first blood shed to cover sin - a picture of the atonement to come. He also sends them out of the Garden in mercy, so they will not eat from the tree of life and live forever in their sinful state.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

Genesis 3:15 is the very first promise of a Savior in the entire Bible. Jesus is the 'seed of the woman' - born of a virgin, fully human - who crushed Satan's power through His death and resurrection, even though it cost Him the wound of the cross. The animal skins God provided point forward to the perfect sacrifice of Christ, whose blood truly covers our sin (1 John 1:7).

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

In the ancient world, serpents were often worshiped or seen as symbols of wisdom and fertility (as in Egyptian and Canaanite religion), which makes the serpent's appearance in Eden pointed - Moses' original audience, fresh out of Egypt, would recognize the serpent as representing the false, deceptive power of pagan religion, now unmasked as an enemy of God. 'Nakedness and shame' in the ancient Near East carried strong social meaning tied to vulnerability and dishonor, which is why covering with garments (first fig leaves, then God's own provision of skins) mattered so much. The Hebrew word for the coming 'seed' (zera) is singular, which the New Testament identifies specifically with Christ (Galatians 3:16). This chapter answers the question every student eventually asks: 'why is the world broken?' - not because God failed, but because humanity chose independence from Him, and God, in mercy, immediately began working toward rescue.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- What are the three things the serpent did to twist God's word, and how does he still do that today?
- Why do you think Adam and Eve tried to hide and blame each other after they sinned?
- What is the promise God makes in Genesis 3:15, and who does the New Testament say fulfills it?
- How does God show grace to Adam and Eve even while punishing their sin?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it means that God promised a Savior before He even finished punishing sin?

Feel

How do you feel when you think about the ways sin has affected your own relationships or choices?

Do

What is one lie about God (like the serpent told) that you need to stop believing and replace with truth this week?

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Talk About It

- What are the three things the serpent did to twist God's word, and how does he still do that today?
- Why do you think Adam and Eve tried to hide and blame each other after they sinned?
- What is the promise God makes in Genesis 3:15, and who does the New Testament say fulfills it?

Memory Verse

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." — Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it means that God promised a Savior before He even finished punishing sin?

FEEL: How do you feel when you think about the ways sin has affected your own relationships or choices?

DO: What is one lie about God (like the serpent told) that you need to stop believing and replace with truth this week?

SESSION 3

Two Brothers, Two Hearts

Genesis 4-5

"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."
— Genesis 4:7 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God cares about the heart behind our worship, not just the outward act - and even as sin spreads through the generations, God still preserves a godly line that leads toward the Savior.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'Have you ever done the right thing on the outside but had a bad attitude on the inside?' God looks past our outward actions straight to our hearts.

Key People in This Session

- Cain — Firstborn son who offers a rejected sacrifice and murders his brother in jealousy
- Abel — Offers a sacrifice by faith that is accepted by God (Hebrews 11:4)
- Seth — Given to Adam and Eve in place of Abel, continuing the godly line
- Enoch — Walked with God and was taken up without dying (Gen 5:24)

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. Two Offerings, Two Hearts (Gen 4:1-7)

Cain brings an offering from the ground; Abel brings the firstborn of his flock 'by faith' (Hebrews 11:4). God accepts Abel's offering and rejects Cain's - not because of the type of offering alone, but because of the faith and heart behind it. God warns Cain that sin is 'crouching at the door,' desiring to master him.

2. The First Murder (Gen 4:8-16)

Instead of ruling over his sin, Cain lets jealousy grow into murder. God confronts him ('Where is your brother?'), Cain lies, and God pronounces judgment - yet even here God shows mercy by putting a mark on Cain to protect his life.

3. The Line of Cain vs. the Line of Seth (Gen 4:17-26)

Cain's descendants build a godless, violent culture (Lamech boasts of murder). But God gives Adam and Eve another son, Seth, and 'at that time men began to call on the name of the LORD' - a faithful remnant continues.

4. From Adam to Noah (Gen 5)

The repeated refrain 'and he died' hammers home the wages of sin from Genesis 3. But Enoch breaks the pattern - he 'walked with God, and he was not, for God took him' - a picture of hope that death is not the final word for those who walk with God.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

Abel's accepted sacrifice points forward to the perfect, accepted sacrifice of Jesus, whose blood 'speaks better things than that of Abel' (Hebrews 12:24) - Abel's blood cried out for vengeance, but Christ's blood cries out for mercy and forgiveness. Even in a world spiraling into violence, God is quietly preserving the godly line that will one day bring the Messiah.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

In the ancient Near East, both farming (Cain) and herding (Abel) were honorable, common occupations, so the issue was never the category of offering but its condition and the worshiper's heart - other Scriptures indicate Abel's offering involved the 'firstborn' and 'fat portions,' the choicest and best, offered in faith, while Cain's lacked that same wholehearted devotion. Genealogies like Genesis 5 functioned in the ancient world as more than records - they established legitimacy, inheritance, and covenant continuity, which is exactly why Scripture preserves this line all the way to Noah (and eventually to Christ in Luke 3). Long lifespans in these early genealogies (Adam living 930 years, Methuselah 969) reflect a pre-Flood world; regardless of how we understand these numbers, their purpose is to trace an unbroken thread of God's faithfulness across generations even as sin's consequences (death, repeated ten times in this chapter) mount up.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- Why do you think God accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's?
- What warning does God give Cain in Genesis 4:7, and how does that apply to us when we feel jealous or angry?
- How is Enoch different from everyone else listed in Genesis 5?
- What does it mean that people 'began to call on the name of the LORD' after Seth was born?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think God cares about more - the size of your offering/effort, or the heart behind it?

Feel

How do you feel when jealousy or comparison creeps into your heart toward a friend or sibling?

Do

Like Enoch, what is one habit you can start this week to 'walk with God' more closely?

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Two Brothers, Two Hearts

Genesis 4-5

*"If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.
And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."*

— Genesis 4:7 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God cares about the heart behind our worship, not just the outward act - and even as sin spreads through the generations, God still preserves a godly line that leads toward the Savior.

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Talk About It

- Why do you think God accepted Abel's offering but not Cain's?
- What warning does God give Cain in Genesis 4:7, and how does that apply to us when we feel jealous or angry?
- How is Enoch different from everyone else listed in Genesis 5?

Memory Verse

"Not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother." — 1 John 3:12 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think God cares about more - the size of your offering/effort, or the heart behind it?

FEEL: How do you feel when jealousy or comparison creeps into your heart toward a friend or sibling?

DO: Like Enoch, what is one habit you can start this week to 'walk with God' more closely?

SESSION 4

Noah and the Flood

Genesis 6-9

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."

— Genesis 6:8 (NKJV)

Big Idea

When the world's wickedness reached its limit, God judged sin through the Flood but saved Noah's family through the ark - a picture of how God always provides a way of salvation for those who trust Him.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'If you knew a storm was coming and someone gave you exact building plans to stay safe, would you follow them - even if your neighbors laughed at you?' Noah did, for 100+ years.

Key People in This Session

- Noah — A righteous man who walked with God and obeyed His instructions to build the ark
- Noah's family (8 people) — Saved through the floodwaters inside the ark
- God — Both righteous Judge of sin and gracious Savior who provides the way of escape

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. The World Gone Wrong (Gen 6:1-8)

'The wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' God was grieved. Yet 'Noah found grace' - salvation always begins with God's grace, not human merit.

2. Building the Ark by Faith (Gen 6:9-22)

God gives Noah detailed, specific instructions for the ark. Hebrews 11:7 tells us Noah built it 'by faith,' 'moved with godly fear,' obeying God even though rain had never fallen before and there was no visible evidence of coming judgment.

3. The Flood and the Rescue (Gen 7-8)

God shuts the door of the ark Himself (7:16) - Noah's family is safely sealed in. The waters cover the earth, judging sin completely, but the ark carries the faithful safely through judgment to a new beginning.

4. The Rainbow Covenant (Gen 9:1-17)

God blesses Noah's family, renews the creation mandate, and makes an unconditional covenant never to destroy the earth by flood again, giving the rainbow as a sign He will remember His promise.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

1 Peter 3:20-21 tells us the ark is a picture ('antitype') of baptism and salvation - just as the ark carried Noah's family safely through the judgment of the floodwaters, Jesus Christ carries everyone who trusts in Him safely through God's judgment on sin. There is only 'one door' into the ark, just as Jesus said, 'I am the door; if anyone enters by Me, he will be saved' (John 10:9).

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

Flood narratives appear across many ancient Near Eastern cultures (most famously the Epic of Gilgamesh's flood account, and the Atrahasis Epic), which shows a shared cultural memory of a catastrophic flood - but the biblical account stands apart theologically: the flood is not the arbitrary result of noisy, annoyed pagan gods, but the righteous judgment of the one true God on real moral evil, executed with justice and mercy together. The ark's dimensions (300 x 50 x 30 cubits, about 450 x 75 x 45 feet) describe a massive, stable barge-like vessel, not a small boat, built for buoyancy and cargo capacity rather than speed - naval engineers have noted its proportions are remarkably seaworthy. The number '40' (days of rain) recurs throughout Scripture as a period of testing (Moses, Israel in the wilderness, Jesus in the desert). The rainbow (Hebrew *qeshet*, also the word for a 'war bow') being 'hung up' in the clouds may picture God laying down His weapon of judgment as a sign of peace.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- What does it mean that 'Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD' even though the whole world was wicked?
- How would you have felt building something as huge as the ark for over 100 years while people mocked you?
- What does Hebrews 11:7 say Noah's obedience was motivated by?
- How does 1 Peter 3:20-21 connect the ark to our salvation in Jesus?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it takes to trust and obey God even when it doesn't make sense to people around you, like it didn't for Noah?

Feel

How do you feel knowing that God, like He shut the door of the ark, personally secures the salvation of everyone who trusts in Jesus?

Do

What is one act of obedience God is asking of you this week, even if it feels like nobody else understands it?

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"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."
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Key People

- Noah — A righteous man who walked with God and obeyed His instructions to build the ark
- Noah's family (8 people) — Saved through the floodwaters inside the ark
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Talk About It

- What does it mean that 'Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD' even though the whole world was wicked?
- How would you have felt building something as huge as the ark for over 100 years while people mocked you?
- What does Hebrews 11:7 say Noah's obedience was motivated by?

Memory Verse

"I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth." — Genesis 9:13 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it takes to trust and obey God even when it doesn't make sense to people around you, like it didn't for Noah?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that God, like He shut the door of the ark, personally secures the salvation of everyone who trusts in Jesus?

DO: What is one act of obedience God is asking of you this week, even if it feels like nobody else understands it?

SESSION 5

Nations Scattered, One God Still at Work

Genesis 10-11

"Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth."

— Genesis 11:9 (NKJV)

Big Idea

When humanity united in pride to make a name for themselves at Babel, God scattered them across the earth - yet He was already planning to call one man, Abram, through whom every nation would be blessed.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask students to try giving each other instructions to build something out of blocks, but each person can only speak a different made-up language. Chaos! That's a small taste of what happened at Babel.

Key People in This Session

- Nimrod — A mighty ruler associated with founding Babel and the early kingdoms of Mesopotamia
- The people of Shinar — United in pride, they build a tower to make a name for themselves instead of God
- God — Confuses their language and scatters them, while quietly preparing to call Abram

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. The Table of Nations (Gen 10)

This chapter traces the families of Noah's sons - Shem, Ham, and Japheth - spreading out into the nations of the earth. It shows God's original plan for humanity to 'fill the earth' and reminds us every nation and people group traces back to one family, one Creator.

2. Pride at Babel (Gen 11:1-4)

Instead of spreading out as God commanded, the people gather in one place to build a city and a tower 'whose top is in the heavens' to 'make a name for ourselves.' This is humanity's attempt at self-glory and self-sufficiency apart from God - the same pride that got Adam and Eve in trouble.

3. God Confuses and Scatters (Gen 11:5-9)

God comes down, confuses their language, and scatters them across the earth - not out of pettiness, but as both judgment on pride and mercy, preventing humanity from uniting in ever greater rebellion. This explains the diversity of languages and nations we see in the world.

4. The Line to Abram (Gen 11:10-32)

Right after the scattering, the text zooms in on one specific genealogy - from Shem to Terah to Abram. In the middle of global scattering and judgment, God is already setting His rescue plan in motion through one family.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

Babel's curse of confused languages and scattered peoples is beautifully reversed at Pentecost in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit enables people from every nation to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ in their own language - the first fruits of the promise that through Abram's seed 'all the families of the earth' would be blessed (Genesis 12:3). Revelation 7:9 shows the ultimate reversal: a multitude from every nation, tribe, and language worshipping the Lamb together.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

'Shinar' refers to ancient Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), the cradle of the earliest civilizations, and the 'tower' was almost certainly a ziggurat - a massive stepped temple-tower common in Sumerian and Babylonian religion, believed to be a literal stairway connecting heaven and earth where gods would descend to meet worshipers. Building with 'brick for stone, and asphalt for mortar' (11:3) is historically accurate to Mesopotamia, which lacked natural stone but had abundant clay and bitumen. 'Making a name for ourselves' directly parallels ancient royal inscriptions where kings boasted of their monuments; this is a story about idolatrous self-exaltation, not merely bad architecture. Nimrod (10:8-10), described as a 'mighty hunter,' is associated in the text with founding Babel, Erech, and Akkad - the great early empire centers - linking him to the same prideful, empire-building spirit condemned at the tower.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- What was wrong with the people's motivation for building the tower ('let us make a name for ourselves')?
- How is God's judgment at Babel also an act of mercy?
- Why do you think the Bible immediately follows the Babel story with the genealogy leading to Abram?
- How does the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 reverse what happened at Babel?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it looks like today when people try to 'make a name for themselves' instead of giving glory to God?

Feel

How do you feel knowing that even in judgment, God was already planning to bless every nation through Abram - and ultimately through Jesus?

Do

What is one way you can seek to make God's name great this week instead of your own?

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- The people of Shinar — United in pride, they build a tower to make a name for themselves instead of God
- God — Confuses their language and scatters them, while quietly preparing to call Abram

Talk About It

- What was wrong with the people's motivation for building the tower ('let us make a name for ourselves')?
- How is God's judgment at Babel also an act of mercy?
- Why do you think the Bible immediately follows the Babel story with the genealogy leading to Abram?

Memory Verse

"And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves.'" — Genesis 11:4 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it looks like today when people try to 'make a name for themselves' instead of giving glory to God?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that even in judgment, God was already planning to bless every nation through Abram - and ultimately through Jesus?

DO: What is one way you can seek to make God's name great this week instead of your own?

SESSION 6

The Call of Abram

Genesis 12-14

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

— Genesis 12:2-3 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God called Abram to leave everything familiar and follow Him by faith, promising to bless him and, through him, bless every family on earth - a promise that finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'Would you be willing to move to a brand-new place if God told you to go, but didn't tell you exactly where or why?' That's precisely what God asked of Abram.

Key People in This Session

- Abram (later Abraham) — Called by God to leave his homeland and become the father of God's covenant people
- Sarai (later Sarah) — Abram's wife, who travels with him in faith
- Lot — Abram's nephew, who chooses the land near Sodom for its prosperity
- Melchizedek — King of Salem and priest of God Most High, who blesses Abram - a foreshadowing of Christ

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. The Call and the Covenant Promise (Gen 12:1-9)

God calls Abram to leave his country, family, and father's house for a land God will show him. Attached to this call is a massive promise: Abram will become a great nation, be blessed, and be a blessing to 'all the families of the earth.' Abram obeys and goes - by faith, not by sight.

2. A Stumble in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20)

Facing famine, Abram's faith wavers - he lies about Sarai being his sister out of fear. Even great heroes of faith have moments of doubt, yet God remains faithful to protect His promise and His people despite their failures.

3. Abram and Lot Separate (Gen 13)

To avoid conflict, Abram graciously lets Lot choose land first; Lot chooses the lush plain near Sodom, while Abram trusts God for the rest. This models generosity and trust over grabbing for the best for oneself.

4. Rescue and Blessing from Melchizedek (Gen 14)

Abram rescues Lot from captured kings, then meets the mysterious Melchizedek, 'king of Salem' (later Jerusalem) and 'priest of God Most High,' who blesses Abram and shares bread and wine. Abram gives him a tenth of everything.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

Galatians 3:16 tells us the promise to Abram's 'Seed' ultimately points to one person - Christ. Every family on earth is blessed through Abram's line because Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, brings salvation to all nations. Melchizedek, priest-king of Salem who blesses Abram with bread and wine, is explicitly used in Hebrews 7 as a type of Christ - our great High Priest and King who is a priest forever 'according to the order of Melchizedek,' with no recorded beginning or end.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

Abram's hometown, Ur of the Chaldees, was a sophisticated, wealthy city in Mesopotamia with advanced ziggurats and moon-god worship (the god Sin) - leaving it meant abandoning economic security and extended family protection, which in the ancient world was essentially your entire safety net and identity. Haran, where Abram's family paused, was likewise a major center of moon-god worship, reinforcing how radical it was for Abram to leave polytheistic culture behind to follow one invisible God. The practice of tithing (giving a tenth) to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:20 is the earliest tithe recorded in Scripture, predating the Mosaic Law by centuries. 'Salem' is widely understood to be an early name for Jerusalem, meaning God placed His future holy city at the center of this remarkable priest-king encounter from the very beginning of the covenant story.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- What did Abram have to leave behind to follow God's call, and what was he promised in return?
- Why do you think Abram lied about Sarai in Egypt, even after such a great promise from God?
- What does Abram's choice to let Lot pick land first teach us about trusting God over grabbing the best for ourselves?
- How does Melchizedek in Genesis 14 point us forward to Jesus?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it would take for you to trust God enough to obey Him even without knowing all the details, like Abram did?

Feel

How do you feel about the promise that God wants to bless 'all the families of the earth' through His plan - including your own family?

Do

What is one step of faith God might be calling you to take this week, even if you can't see the whole path?

SESSION 6
The Call of Abram
Genesis 12-14

"I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

— Genesis 12:2-3 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God called Abram to leave everything familiar and follow Him by faith, promising to bless him and, through him, bless every family on earth - a promise that finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Key People

- Abram (later Abraham) — Called by God to leave his homeland and become the father of God's covenant people
- Sarai (later Sarah) — Abram's wife, who travels with him in faith
- Lot — Abram's nephew, who chooses the land near Sodom for its prosperity
- Melchizedek — King of Salem and priest of God Most High, who blesses Abram - a foreshadowing of Christ

Talk About It

- What did Abram have to leave behind to follow God's call, and what was he promised in return?
- Why do you think Abram lied about Sarai in Egypt, even after such a great promise from God?
- What does Abram's choice to let Lot pick land first teach us about trusting God over grabbing the best for ourselves?

Memory Verse

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going." — Hebrews 11:8 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it would take for you to trust God enough to obey Him even without knowing all the details, like Abram did?

FEEL: How do you feel about the promise that God wants to bless 'all the families of the earth' through His plan - including your own family?

DO: What is one step of faith God might be calling you to take this week, even if you can't see the whole path?

SESSION 7

The Covenant Confirmed

Genesis 15-17

"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."
— Genesis 15:6 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God confirmed His covenant with Abram in an unforgettable ceremony, counted Abram's faith as righteousness, and sealed the promise with a new name and the sign of circumcision - showing that salvation has always come by faith, not works.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'If someone promised you something amazing but you had to just take their word for it with zero proof, how hard would that be to believe?' That's exactly Abram's situation, looking up at the stars.

Key People in This Session

- Abram/Abraham — Counted righteous by faith; renamed 'father of many nations'
- Sarai/Sarah — Renamed 'princess'; promised to bear the covenant son in her old age
- Hagar — Sarai's servant, mother of Ishmael, whom God also sees and cares for
- Ishmael — Born through Hagar; blessed by God but not the child of promise

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. Faith Counted as Righteousness (Gen 15:1-6)

God reassures fearful, childless Abram with a promise of countless descendants 'like the stars.' Abram simply believes God, and this faith - not any work he does - is credited to him as righteousness. This is the theological heartbeat of the whole Bible's message of salvation by grace through faith.

2. The Covenant Ceremony (Gen 15:7-21)

In a solemn ancient ritual, animals are cut in half and a smoking firepot and blazing torch (representing God's presence) pass between the pieces - alone. This was how covenant parties would say 'may this happen to me if I break my promise,' but here God alone passes through, making this an unconditional covenant resting entirely on His faithfulness, not Abram's.

3. Human Impatience: Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 16)

Rather than waiting on God's timing, Sarai and Abram try to fulfill the promise through Hagar. It 'works' in the short term but creates lasting family pain - a warning about trying to accomplish God's plan our own way, on our own timetable.

4. New Names and the Sign of Circumcision (Gen 17)

God appears again, renaming Abram 'Abraham' (father of many nations) and Sarai 'Sarah' (princess), reaffirming His everlasting covenant, and giving circumcision as its physical sign for Abraham's household.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

Romans 4 uses Abraham's story as the pattern for how anyone is saved: 'to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness' (Romans 4:5). We are declared righteous the same way Abraham was - not by our efforts, but by trusting God's promise, ultimately fulfilled in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

The covenant ceremony of Genesis 15 (called a 'covenant of the pieces') matches known ancient Near Eastern treaty-making customs, where two parties would walk together between severed animal halves, invoking a self-curse of death upon whichever party broke the agreement. What makes Genesis 15 remarkable is that Abram is put into a deep sleep and only God - represented by the smoking firepot and torch - passes through alone, meaning God is taking the covenant's obligations entirely on Himself. Hagar, an Egyptian servant, was likely acquired during Abram's earlier stay in Egypt (Gen 12); surrogate motherhood through a servant to secure an heir was a recognized (though painful) legal practice in the ancient Near East, documented in texts like the Code of Hammurabi. Circumcision, given as a covenant sign in Genesis 17, was practiced by some other ancient cultures for various reasons, but for Abraham's family it became a unique, permanent mark identifying the covenant people set apart to the one true God, later carried into the Law of Moses.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- What does it mean that Abram's faith, not his good works, was counted to him as righteousness?
- Why do you think God alone passed through the pieces in the covenant ceremony instead of both Abram and God?
- What went wrong when Abram and Sarai tried to make God's promise happen through Hagar?
- How does Abraham's story in Romans 4 help explain how we are saved today?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think is the difference between trying to earn God's favor and simply trusting His promise like Abraham did?

Feel

How do you feel when you're tempted to 'help God out' by taking matters into your own hands instead of waiting on Him?

Do

What is one area where you need to trade impatience for trust in God's timing this week?

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"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."

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God confirmed His covenant with Abram in an unforgettable ceremony, counted Abram's faith as righteousness, and sealed the promise with a new name and the sign of circumcision - showing that salvation has always come by faith, not works.

Key People

- Abram/Abraham — Counted righteous by faith; renamed 'father of many nations'
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- Hagar — Sarai's servant, mother of Ishmael, whom God also sees and cares for
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Talk About It

- What does it mean that Abram's faith, not his good works, was counted to him as righteousness?
- Why do you think God alone passed through the pieces in the covenant ceremony instead of both Abram and God?
- What went wrong when Abram and Sarai tried to make God's promise happen through Hagar?

Memory Verse

"For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'" — Romans 4:3 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think is the difference between trying to earn God's favor and simply trusting His promise like Abraham did?

FEEL: How do you feel when you're tempted to 'help God out' by taking matters into your own hands instead of waiting on Him?

DO: What is one area where you need to trade impatience for trust in God's timing this week?

SESSION 8

Abraham's Intercession and the Judgment of Sodom

Genesis 18-19

"Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

— Genesis 18:14 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God shares His plans with His friend Abraham, who boldly intercedes for the righteous, and even in the terrible judgment of Sodom, God remembers Abraham and rescues Lot - showing us both God's justice and His mercy.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'If you knew something terrible was about to happen to a city, and you had a chance to speak up for the people there, would you? How many times would you ask?' Abraham asks God six times.

Key People in This Session

- Abraham — Hosts the LORD and two angels, then boldly intercedes for Sodom
- Sarah — Laughs privately at the promise of a son in her old age
- Lot — Rescued from Sodom's destruction by the mercy of God, for Abraham's sake
- Lot's wife — Looks back toward Sodom and becomes a pillar of salt, a warning against clinging to sin

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. Three Visitors and a Promise (Gen 18:1-15)

The LORD, appearing with two angels, reaffirms to Abraham that Sarah will have a son within the year. Sarah laughs in disbelief, but God's question cuts to the heart of faith: 'Is anything too hard for the LORD?'

2. Abraham's Bold Intercession (Gen 18:16-33)

God chooses to let Abraham 'in' on His plan to judge Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham, as God's friend, boldly and respectfully pleads for the city, asking God to spare it for the sake of even ten righteous people. This models prayer that appeals to God's own justice and mercy.

3. The Destruction of Sodom (Gen 19:1-29)

Sodom's wickedness is extreme and thoroughgoing. Angels rescue Lot and his family, warning them not to look back, before God rains down fire and brimstone. 'God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of

the overthrow' - Lot is saved because of Abraham's relationship with God, a picture of mercy shown for another's sake.

4. The Cost of Compromise (Gen 19:15-38)

Lot's hesitation to leave, his wife's fatal backward glance, and his daughters' tragic choices afterward show the corrosive, lingering effects of choosing to live too close to sin for too long.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

Abraham's intercession for Sodom foreshadows the far greater intercession of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who 'always lives to make intercession' for those who come to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25). Just as Lot was rescued from judgment because God remembered Abraham, every believer is rescued from the judgment of sin because God looks at us through Christ, our righteous Mediator.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

Hospitality was one of the most sacred obligations in the ancient Near East - welcoming and protecting travelers/strangers was a matter of honor and survival in a harsh climate, which is exactly why Sodom's violent mistreatment of Abraham's angelic visitors (attempting a mob assault) represented such an extreme, universally recognized moral horror in the ancient world, on top of the sexual immorality named elsewhere in Scripture (Jude 7; Ezekiel 16:49-50 also names pride, excess, and neglect of the poor among Sodom's sins). The 'cities of the plain' (Sodom, Gomorrah, and others) were located in the fertile Jordan Valley region, likely near the southern end of the Dead Sea; archaeological sites like Tall el-Hammam and Bab edh-Dhra have been proposed as candidates, showing evidence of sudden, catastrophic destruction consistent with the biblical account. Abraham's bargaining posture (repeatedly saying 'let not the Lord be angry') reflects respectful ancient Near Eastern negotiation customs with a superior, showing appropriate reverence while still pressing his appeal.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- Why do you think God chose to tell Abraham His plans for Sodom before acting?
- What can we learn about prayer from the way Abraham intercedes for the city?
- Why might Lot's wife have looked back, and what warning does that give us?
- How does 'God remembered Abraham' when rescuing Lot show us something about how we are saved through Christ?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it means to intercede (pray boldly) for other people the way Abraham did?

Feel

How do you feel about the idea that God takes sin seriously enough to judge it, but is also full of mercy?

Do

Who is someone you can intercede in prayer for this week, the way Abraham prayed for Sodom?

SESSION 8

Abraham's Intercession and the Judgment of Sodom

Genesis 18-19

"Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

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God shares His plans with His friend Abraham, who boldly intercedes for the righteous, and even in the terrible judgment of Sodom, God remembers Abraham and rescues Lot - showing us both God's justice and His mercy.

Key People

- Abraham — Hosts the LORD and two angels, then boldly intercedes for Sodom
- Sarah — Laughs privately at the promise of a son in her old age
- Lot — Rescued from Sodom's destruction by the mercy of God, for Abraham's sake
- Lot's wife — Looks back toward Sodom and becomes a pillar of salt, a warning against clinging to sin

Talk About It

- Why do you think God chose to tell Abraham His plans for Sodom before acting?
- What can we learn about prayer from the way Abraham intercedes for the city?
- Why might Lot's wife have looked back, and what warning does that give us?

Memory Verse

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" — Genesis 18:25 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it means to intercede (pray boldly) for other people the way Abraham did?

FEEL: How do you feel about the idea that God takes sin seriously enough to judge it, but is also full of mercy?

DO: Who is someone you can intercede in prayer for this week, the way Abraham prayed for Sodom?

SESSION 9

The Son of Promise and the Ultimate Test

Genesis 21-22

"And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.'"

— Genesis 22:8 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God kept His promise by giving Isaac to Abraham and Sarah in their old age, then tested Abraham's faith by asking him to offer Isaac - revealing the clearest picture in the Old Testament of God providing His own Son as our substitute.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'What is the hardest thing God could ever ask you to give up?' Abraham was asked to give up the son he had waited 25 years for.

Key People in This Session

- Isaac — The promised son, willingly carries the wood for his own sacrifice - a picture of Christ
- Abraham — Obeys God's shocking command in full faith that God can even raise the dead (Heb 11:19)
- The Angel of the LORD — Stops Abraham's hand at the last moment and provides a ram in Isaac's place

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. Isaac is Born (Gen 21:1-7)

After 25 years of waiting, God does exactly what He promised, 'at the set time of which God had spoken.' Sarah's laughter of disbelief (18:12) turns to laughter of joy - 'God has made me laugh, so that all who hear will laugh with me.'

2. Ishmael Sent Away (Gen 21:8-21)

Conflict arises between Sarah and Hagar's household; God provides for and blesses Ishmael even as he confirms the covenant line will continue through Isaac alone, showing His faithfulness to His specific promises.

3. The Command to Sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:1-8)

God tests Abraham with the unthinkable: 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and... offer him as a burnt offering.' Abraham obeys immediately, trusting (per Hebrews 11:19) that God is able to raise

Isaac from the dead if necessary. Isaac himself carries the wood up the mountain - just as Jesus would carry His own cross.

4. The LORD Will Provide (Gen 22:9-19)

At the critical moment, the Angel of the LORD stops Abraham, and a ram caught in a thicket is offered 'instead of his son.' Abraham names the place 'The-LORD-Will-Provide,' and God renews His covenant oath because of Abraham's obedience.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

This is one of the clearest pictures of the gospel in the entire Old Testament. Abraham offering his 'only son... whom he loved' on Mount Moriah (the same region where Jerusalem, and the cross, would later stand) foreshadows God the Father giving His own beloved Son. Isaac carrying the wood mirrors Jesus carrying His cross. But where a ram substituted for Isaac, no substitute was found for Jesus - He Himself became 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29), the true and final provision that Abraham's ram only pictured. As Romans 8:32 says, 'He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.'

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

Mount Moriah, where Abraham offers Isaac, is later identified as the location of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1) - meaning this event happens in essentially the same geographic area where, centuries later, sacrifices for sin would be offered continually, and near where Jesus would ultimately be crucified just outside the city walls. Child sacrifice was tragically practiced among some Canaanite religions (associated with gods like Molech), so Abraham's culture would not have found the *command* unthinkable in the way we might expect, though it clearly went against God's own revealed character and later Law (which forbids child sacrifice) - which is precisely why this event functions as a unique, one-time test of Abraham's faith rather than a pattern, and why God's provision of a substitute is the climactic, intended outcome all along. The three-day journey (22:4) gave Abraham ample time to change his mind, underscoring that his obedience was deliberate and sustained, not impulsive. Hebrews 11:17-19 explicitly tells us Abraham reasoned that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead, which is why the New Testament treats this episode as a resurrection picture as much as a substitution picture.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- Why do you think God asked Abraham to do something so difficult, and what was He testing?
- How does Isaac carrying the wood up the mountain remind us of Jesus?
- What does the name 'The-LORD-Will-Provide' mean, and how did God provide?
- Why did a ram need to die instead of Isaac, and why did nothing substitute for Jesus?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it means that God provided a substitute for Isaac, but gave His own Son as the substitute for us?

Feel

How do you feel when you consider how much it cost God the Father to give up His own Son for you?

Do

What is something precious to you that God may be asking you to trust Him with fully this week?

SESSION 9

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"And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.'"

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God kept His promise by giving Isaac to Abraham and Sarah in their old age, then tested Abraham's faith by asking him to offer Isaac - revealing the clearest picture in the Old Testament of God providing His own Son as our substitute.

Key People

- Isaac — The promised son, willingly carries the wood for his own sacrifice - a picture of Christ
- Abraham — Obeys God's shocking command in full faith that God can even raise the dead (Heb 11:19)
- The Angel of the LORD — Stops Abraham's hand at the last moment and provides a ram in Isaac's place

Talk About It

- Why do you think God asked Abraham to do something so difficult, and what was He testing?
- How does Isaac carrying the wood up the mountain remind us of Jesus?
- What does the name 'The-LORD-Will-Provide' mean, and how did God provide?

Memory Verse

"And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide." — Genesis 22:14 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it means that God provided a substitute for Isaac, but gave His own Son as the substitute for us?

FEEL: How do you feel when you consider how much it cost God the Father to give up His own Son for you?

DO: What is something precious to you that God may be asking you to trust Him with fully this week?

SESSION 10

Family, Blessing, and a Stolen Birthright

Genesis 24-27

"Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger."

— Genesis 25:23 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God guided the search for Isaac's wife and continued His covenant promise through Jacob and Esau - but even in a family full of favoritism and deception, God's sovereign plan for the promised line moved forward.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'Have you ever seen a family where one kid is clearly the favorite?' Isaac's family struggled with exactly this, and it caused huge problems.

Key People in This Session

- Isaac — The promised son, now grown; loves Esau and is deceived by Jacob
- Rebekah — Chosen through God's guidance to marry Isaac; favors and helps Jacob
- Esau — The firstborn, who carelessly sells his birthright for a bowl of stew
- Jacob — The younger twin, chosen by God's sovereign plan, though flawed and deceptive

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. Finding a Wife for Isaac (Gen 24)

Abraham sends his servant to find a wife for Isaac from his own relatives rather than the Canaanites. The servant prays for specific guidance, and God answers clearly through Rebekah's generous character at the well - a beautiful example of seeking God's will in life's big decisions.

2. Two Nations in the Womb (Gen 25:19-34)

Rebekah struggles with a difficult pregnancy, and God tells her the older (Esau) will serve the younger (Jacob) - reversing normal birth-order expectations to show that God's plan operates by His sovereign choice, not human custom. Esau later despises his birthright, trading it for a bowl of stew - a picture of valuing the temporary over the eternal.

3. Isaac's Compromise and Blessing (Gen 26)

Isaac repeats his father's mistake, lying about Rebekah being his sister. Yet God still reaffirms the covenant blessing to Isaac, showing that God's promises don't depend on human perfection.

4. The Stolen Blessing (Gen 27)

Rebekah and Jacob deceive blind, aging Isaac to steal Esau's blessing. Though God's stated plan (25:23) was for Jacob to be blessed, the family accomplishes it through lies and manipulation rather than trusting God - bringing years of painful consequences (Jacob must flee, and is later deceived himself by Laban).

Seeing Jesus in This Session

God's sovereign choice of Jacob over Esau 'before the twins were born, before they had done anything good or bad' (Romans 9:11) demonstrates that salvation and blessing come by God's gracious calling, not human merit or birth order - the same grace by which anyone, Jew or Gentile, is grafted into God's family through faith in Christ. Even when God's people scheme and deceive instead of trusting Him, God's covenant promise - which will ultimately produce the Messiah - cannot be thwarted by human failure.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

In the ancient Near East, the firstborn son typically received a double portion of inheritance (the 'birthright') and a formal patriarchal 'blessing' that functioned almost like a legally binding will, spoken aloud and considered irrevocable once given - which is exactly why Esau's careless trade and Jacob's deceptive theft carried such permanent, devastating weight in this culture. Marriage negotiations, as seen in Genesis 24, typically involved a matchmaker or family representative, a dowry/gifts (Rebekah receives gold jewelry), and family consent - all customs faithfully reflected in this narrative. Twin rivalry and birth-order reversal (younger over older) is a recurring biblical theme (Jacob over Esau, Ephraim over Manasseh, David over his brothers) that repeatedly teaches Israel that God's election operates by grace, not natural expectation or merit.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- What does Esau selling his birthright for a bowl of stew teach us about valuing short-term desires over long-term blessings?
- How did the servant seek and recognize God's guidance in finding a wife for Isaac?
- Why do you think Rebekah and Jacob resorted to deception even though God had already promised Jacob would be blessed?
- What does Romans 9 teach us about why God chose Jacob over Esau?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it means to trust God's promises instead of trying to manipulate outcomes yourself, like Jacob and Rebekah did?

Feel

How do you feel when you're tempted to trade something valuable (like your integrity) for something that feels good right now?

Do

What is one decision this week where you can choose to trust God's timing instead of taking a shortcut?

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— Genesis 25:23 (NKJV)

Big Idea

God guided the search for Isaac's wife and continued His covenant promise through Jacob and Esau - but even in a family full of favoritism and deception, God's sovereign plan for the promised line moved forward.

Key People

- Isaac — The promised son, now grown; loves Esau and is deceived by Jacob
- Rebekah — Chosen through God's guidance to marry Isaac; favors and helps Jacob
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Talk About It

- What does Esau selling his birthright for a bowl of stew teach us about valuing short-term desires over long-term blessings?
- How did the servant seek and recognize God's guidance in finding a wife for Isaac?
- Why do you think Rebekah and Jacob resorted to deception even though God had already promised Jacob would be blessed?

Memory Verse

"So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." — Romans 9:16 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it means to trust God's promises instead of trying to manipulate outcomes yourself, like Jacob and Rebekah did?

FEEL: How do you feel when you're tempted to trade something valuable (like your integrity) for something that feels good right now?

DO: What is one decision this week where you can choose to trust God's timing instead of taking a shortcut?

SESSION 11

Jacob's Ladder and Wrestling with God

Genesis 28-33

"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 spoken to you."

— Genesis 28:15 (NKJV)

Big Idea

Even while Jacob was running from the consequences of his own sin, God met him with an unconditional promise of presence - and years later, God transformed Jacob's very identity through a wrestling match that left him changed forever.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'Have you ever run from a problem, only to find God meeting you right in the middle of your mess?' That is exactly Jacob's story in these chapters.

Key People in This Session

- Jacob — Fleeing his brother's anger, encounters God at Bethel and is later renamed Israel
- Laban — Jacob's uncle, who deceives Jacob just as Jacob once deceived Esau
- Leah and Rachel — Jacob's wives, mothers of the twelve tribes of Israel
- Esau — Meets Jacob again years later with surprising forgiveness and grace

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. The Ladder to Heaven (Gen 28:10-22)

Fleeing Esau's anger, Jacob dreams of a ladder (or stairway) reaching to heaven with angels ascending and descending, and the LORD standing above it, reaffirming the covenant promise to this undeserving, running man. Jacob wakes and says, 'Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.'

2. Deceiver Deceived (Gen 29-31)

Jacob spends twenty years working for his uncle Laban, who tricks him just as he once tricked Esau and Isaac (swapping Leah for Rachel on the wedding night). Through it all, God blesses Jacob with a large family and prospers him, teaching Jacob what it feels like to be on the receiving end of deception.

3. Wrestling with God (Gen 32:22-32)

Alone at night before facing Esau again, Jacob wrestles with a mysterious 'Man' (understood as a theophany, an appearance of God Himself) until daybreak. Jacob, though his hip is wrenched, refuses to let go without a blessing - and God renames him 'Israel' ('he struggles with God'), marking a turning point in his character.

4. Reconciliation with Esau (Gen 33)

Jacob, now humbled and limping, approaches Esau in fear - but Esau runs to meet him, embraces him, and weeps. God had already been softening both brothers' hearts, showing His power to bring reconciliation where only bitterness seemed possible.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

Jesus Himself references Jacob's ladder in John 1:51, telling Nathanael, 'You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man' - Jesus is the true ladder, the one connection point between heaven and earth, God and sinful humanity. And just as Jacob could not overcome God's blessing by his own strength but received it by clinging on in weakness, we receive God's blessing not by our own strength but by clinging to Christ in humble, desperate faith.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

Bethel ('house of God'), where Jacob has his dream, was an already-significant site where Abraham had built an altar (Gen 12:8) - Jacob's experience there reconnects him to his grandfather's covenant faith at a moment of personal crisis. The wedding-night deception with Leah is explained by ancient customs: brides were heavily veiled, weddings involved significant wine and darkness, and marriage contracts were sealed by consummation, making Laban's switch (though still a betrayal) logistically believable in that cultural setting; Laban later justifies it by citing local custom that the younger daughter cannot marry before the firstborn (29:26) - a custom conveniently unmentioned before the wedding. The name change from Jacob ('heel-grabber' or 'deceiver,' from his birth grabbing Esau's heel, 25:26) to Israel ('God strives' or 'he struggles with God') marks one of Scripture's clearest transformation-of-character moments, and 'Israel' becomes the name for God's entire covenant people going forward. Jacob's limp after wrestling is a permanent physical reminder that true blessing often comes through brokenness and surrendered dependence on God, not self-sufficient strength.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- What does it mean that God met Jacob with a promise even while Jacob was running from his own mistakes?
- How does Jacob's experience of being deceived by Laban relate to how he had treated Esau and Isaac?
- Why do you think Jacob refused to let go of the 'Man' until he received a blessing?
- What does the name change from Jacob to Israel represent about his relationship with God?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it means to 'wrestle' with God in prayer, holding on until you receive His blessing or peace?

Feel

How do you feel knowing that God can meet you and transform you even in the middle of the consequences of your own choices?

Do

Is there a relationship in your life, like Jacob and Esau's, that needs the first step toward reconciliation this week?

SESSION 11

Jacob's Ladder and Wrestling with God

Genesis 28-33

"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 spoken to you."

— Genesis 28:15 (NKJV)

Big Idea

Even while Jacob was running from the consequences of his own sin, God met him with an unconditional promise of presence - and years later, God transformed Jacob's very identity through a wrestling match that left him changed forever.

Key People

- Jacob — Fleeing his brother's anger, encounters God at Bethel and is later renamed Israel
- Laban — Jacob's uncle, who deceives Jacob just as Jacob once deceived Esau
- Leah and Rachel — Jacob's wives, mothers of the twelve tribes of Israel
- Esau — Meets Jacob again years later with surprising forgiveness and grace

Talk About It

- What does it mean that God met Jacob with a promise even while Jacob was running from his own mistakes?
- How does Jacob's experience of being deceived by Laban relate to how he had treated Esau and Isaac?
- Why do you think Jacob refused to let go of the 'Man' until he received a blessing?

Memory Verse

"Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." — Genesis 32:28 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it means to 'wrestle' with God in prayer, holding on until you receive His blessing or peace?

FEEL: How do you feel knowing that God can meet you and transform you even in the middle of the consequences of your own choices?

DO: Is there a relationship in your life, like Jacob and Esau's, that needs the first step toward reconciliation this week?

SESSION 12

Joseph: From the Pit to the Palace

Genesis 37, 39-41

"The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man."

— Genesis 39:2 (NKJV)

Big Idea

Joseph was betrayed, enslaved, and forgotten - but through it all God was quietly working, exalting him from the pit to the palace, foreshadowing how Jesus would suffer rejection before being exalted to the highest place.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'Have you ever been treated unfairly by people who were supposed to love you?' Joseph's own brothers sold him into slavery - yet God never left him.

Key People in This Session

- Joseph — Favored son, sold into slavery by his brothers, later exalted to rule over Egypt
- Jacob (Israel) — Joseph's father, who plays favorites and grieves Joseph's presumed death
- Joseph's brothers — Jealous of Joseph's favor and dreams, they sell him into slavery
- Potiphar's wife — Falsely accuses Joseph after he refuses to sin with her
- Pharaoh — Elevates Joseph to second-in-command over all Egypt after his God-given dream interpretation

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. The Favored Son and His Dreams (Gen 37)

Jacob's favoritism (the coat of many colors) and Joseph's dreams of ruling over his family stoke his brothers' jealousy to the breaking point. They throw him into a pit and sell him to Midianite traders, then deceive their father into believing he is dead.

2. Faithful in Slavery and Prison (Gen 39)

Sold to Potiphar in Egypt, Joseph rises to a position of trust through godly diligence - but is falsely accused by Potiphar's wife after refusing to sin ('How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?') and thrown in prison. Even there, 'the LORD was with Joseph' and gives him favor.

3. Interpreting Dreams (Gen 40-41)

In prison, Joseph correctly interprets dreams for Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker, always giving God the credit ('Do not interpretations belong to God?'). Two years later, he interprets Pharaoh's dreams of famine and plenty, and Pharaoh exalts him to rule all of Egypt, second only to himself.

4. God's Hidden Hand Throughout

At every stage - the pit, slavery, false accusation, prison, forgotten by the cupbearer for two more years - God's providence is quietly, patiently at work, turning betrayal and injustice into a position from which Joseph will one day save his whole family.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

Joseph is one of the clearest 'types' (foreshadowings) of Christ in the Old Testament: beloved by his father, rejected and betrayed by his own people, sold for silver, falsely accused though innocent, and ultimately exalted to the highest place of authority - just as Jesus was rejected by His own (John 1:11), sold for thirty pieces of silver, falsely accused, and then 'highly exalted' by the Father (Philippians 2:9-11) to save people from every nation.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

The 'coat of many colors' (or 'tunic of many colors'/a long robe with sleeves) likely signified a garment worn by someone exempt from manual labor - a visible symbol of favored status that would have deeply provoked working brothers. The sale price of twenty shekels of silver (37:28) matches the going rate for a young male slave documented in other ancient Near Eastern texts from this general era, lending historical realism to the account. Egyptian records confirm Semitic peoples were indeed sometimes sold into or entered Egyptian households as servants, and a foreigner rising to high administrative office (like Joseph as vizier) - while remarkable - has parallels in Egyptian history, particularly during periods when Egypt's rulers were more open to foreign talent. Egyptian dream interpretation was a serious professional discipline (Pharaoh's 'magicians and wise men' in 41:8), which is precisely why Joseph's insistence that interpretations belong to God alone, not to Egyptian magic, stood out as a bold testimony in a polytheistic court.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- How did Joseph respond to unfair treatment at each stage - the pit, slavery, prison?
- What gave Joseph the strength to resist Potiphar's wife and to keep serving faithfully in prison?
- How do we see 'the LORD was with Joseph' even when his circumstances looked hopeless?
- In what ways does Joseph's story - rejected, then exalted - remind you of Jesus?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it means that God can be working for good even when your circumstances feel unfair or out of control?

Feel

How do you feel when you imagine being forgotten or mistreated the way Joseph was - and how might Joseph have felt trusting God through it?

Do

What is one situation right now where you need to trust that God is quietly at work, even if you can't see it yet?

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Talk About It

- How did Joseph respond to unfair treatment at each stage - the pit, slavery, prison?
- What gave Joseph the strength to resist Potiphar's wife and to keep serving faithfully in prison?
- How do we see 'the LORD was with Joseph' even when his circumstances looked hopeless?

Memory Verse

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name." — Philippians 2:9 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it means that God can be working for good even when your circumstances feel unfair or out of control?

FEEL: How do you feel when you imagine being forgotten or mistreated the way Joseph was - and how might Joseph have felt trusting God through it?

DO: What is one situation right now where you need to trust that God is quietly at work, even if you can't see it yet?

SESSION 13

Joseph's Forgiveness and 'God Meant It for Good'

Genesis 42-50

"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."

— Genesis 50:20 (NKJV)

Big Idea

When Joseph's brothers stood before him in fear, expecting revenge, he offered forgiveness instead - declaring that even their evil intentions, God used for good, to save many people alive, just as the cross would later turn humanity's worst act into our greatest salvation.

Opening Hook (5 minutes)

Ask: 'If someone hurt you badly and later needed your help, would you help them?' Joseph didn't just help his brothers - he wept, forgave, and provided for them completely.

Key People in This Session

- Joseph — Reveals himself to his brothers, forgives them, and saves his family and Egypt from famine
- Judah — Once willing to sell Joseph, now offers himself as a substitute for Benjamin - showing real change
- Benjamin — Joseph's younger full brother, tested by Joseph to reveal his brothers' hearts
- Jacob (Israel) — Reunited with Joseph and moves his whole family to Egypt; blesses his sons before he dies

Teaching Outline (30 minutes)

1. The Brothers Return, Tested (Gen 42-44)

Famine drives Joseph's brothers to Egypt to buy grain, not recognizing the powerful ruler before them as Joseph. Through a series of tests (accusing them of spying, holding Simeon, planting a cup in Benjamin's sack), Joseph discerns whether his brothers have truly changed.

2. Judah's Transformation (Gen 44:18-34)

Judah, who once suggested selling Joseph for profit, now passionately offers to become a slave himself in Benjamin's place, for the sake of his father's grief. This remarkable change of heart proves the brothers are no longer the same men who sold Joseph years earlier.

3. Joseph Reveals Himself (Gen 45)

Overcome with emotion, Joseph reveals his identity and immediately reassures his terrified brothers: 'do not be grieved or angry with yourselves... God sent me before you to preserve life.' He sees God's providence, not merely his brothers' sin, as the true story.

4. Reunion and Jacob's Blessing (Gen 46-50)

Jacob's whole family (70 people) moves to Egypt and settles in Goshen. Before he dies, Jacob blesses his twelve sons, including a prophetic blessing on Judah that the scepter (kingship) will not depart from his line (49:10) - pointing toward King David and ultimately King Jesus. The book closes with Joseph's climactic statement of faith in 50:20 and his own confident hope of God's future deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

Seeing Jesus in This Session

Genesis 50:20 is one of the most profound statements of God's sovereignty over evil in all of Scripture, and it anticipates the cross: the very worst act ever committed - the crucifixion of the sinless Son of God - was 'meant for good' by God, to accomplish the salvation of countless people (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). Jacob's dying blessing on Judah (49:10), promising a coming ruler to whom 'the obedience of the people' belongs, is a direct messianic prophecy fulfilled in Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), the true and greater Joseph who forgives, provides, and saves His people from death.

Teacher Background: Historical & Cultural Notes

Egypt was famously one of the best-prepared nations against famine in the ancient world due to the reliable, though sometimes failing, flooding of the Nile, and its centralized grain-storage administration (which Joseph himself designs in Gen 41) is well attested as a real feature of Egyptian statecraft, lending strong historical plausibility to the narrative's setting. Goshen, where Jacob's family settles, was a fertile region in the eastern Nile Delta well suited for shepherding - a profession Egyptians themselves considered beneath them ('every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians,' 46:34), which conveniently kept Israel somewhat separate and unassimilated, preserving their distinct identity for the centuries to come. The Judah blessing in Genesis 49:8-12, with its reference to a scepter and a coming ruler ('Shiloh' or 'until he comes to whom it belongs'), was recognized as messianic by ancient Jewish interpreters long before Christianity, showing this expectation of a coming King from Judah's line was deeply embedded in Israel's own self-understanding. Embalming and a 70-day mourning period for Jacob (50:2-3) reflect authentic Egyptian funerary customs, underscoring the honor given to Jacob within Pharaoh's court because of Joseph's standing.

Discussion Questions (10 minutes)

- What changed in Judah's heart between Genesis 37 (selling Joseph) and Genesis 44 (offering himself for Benjamin)?
- How did Joseph's perspective on his brothers' sin - 'God meant it for good' - allow him to forgive rather than take revenge?
- What does Jacob's blessing on Judah in Genesis 49:10 point forward to?
- How does the whole book of Genesis, from Creation to this final chapter, keep pointing us toward the need for and hope of a Savior?

Closing Personal Application (Think / Feel / Do)

Think

What do you think it means to trust that God can work even the worst things people do to you for good, the way Joseph did?

Feel

How do you feel about someone who has hurt you, and how might seeing God's bigger purpose change that feeling?

Do

Who is someone you need to extend Joseph-like forgiveness to this week, trusting God with the outcome?

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- What does Jacob's blessing on Judah in Genesis 49:10 point forward to?

Memory Verse

"But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life." — Genesis 45:5 (NKJV)

MY RESPONSE — Think / Feel / Do

THINK: What do you think it means to trust that God can work even the worst things people do to you for good, the way Joseph did?

FEEL: How do you feel about someone who has hurt you, and how might seeing God's bigger purpose change that feeling?

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