



EQUIPPED WITH THE FILAMENT BIBLE APP

HelpFinder™ Bible

God's Answers
to Life's Questions




new living
TRANSLATION®

presented to

by

on the occasion of

date

*Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.*

PSALM 119:105

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17



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Alphabetical Listing of Bible Books

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1 Corinthians	1028	1 John	1137	Philemon	1105
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Daniel	771	3 John	1145	Proverbs	558
Deuteronomy	158	Jonah	814	Psalms	479
Ecclesiastes	587	Joshua	193	Revelation	1150
Ephesians	1064	Jude	1147	Romans	1011
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Contributors

GENERAL EDITORS

Dr. V. Gilbert Beers
Ronald A. Beers

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Dr. Brian R. Coffey

EDITORIAL STAFF

Mark R. Norton
Leanne F. Rolland
Timothy Belcher
Ava James

Kathryn S. Olson

Vinita Hampton Wright

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Dan Farrell
Jennifer Ghionzoli

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Victoria Martin

TYPESETTER

Brooke Lorenz

BRAND DIRECTOR

James S. Gager

PUBLISHER

Amy Simpson

BIBLE ACQUISITIONS DIRECTOR

Ryan Peterson

SENIOR ACQUISITIONS EDITOR

Mindy Ferguson



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- 3** Follow the prompts to learn how it works, and enjoy exploring!

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Read This First

Welcome to the *HelpFinder Bible!*

Think back to yesterday. Can you recall the range of emotions you experienced? Did you feel angry, happy, discouraged, tired? Were you frustrated? lonely? excited? worried? scared? embarrassed? bitter? Did you feel inadequate? Were you grieving? Did someone hurt your feelings? Were you criticized or ignored? Did you end the day with regrets? Did you long to rekindle a relationship with a friend or spouse? Did you long to feel the presence of God? Were you wondering how to pray more effectively?

These questions point to just a few of the many life-needs that are identified in the *HelpFinder Bible*. Now you have a place to look up those needs and instantly see where you can find help from the Bible for each one. When you are wrestling with a need, issue, or emotion, simply look it up in the HelpFinder Index at the back of the Bible. Under each topic you will find questions that help you focus on the kind of help you are looking for, many Scripture passages that show how the Bible offers help and encouragement, and application comments that will help you apply the Bible to your specific situation.

Our lives are filled with real human needs and issues. These needs, issues, and the emotions that come with them are what make up everyday life. No one is exempt from them! On some days, one need will leap to the front page of our lives to challenge us. On another day, another will surface—or perhaps several! The exciting news is that God’s Word holds answers and guidance for all the needs you are facing. Before you

were ever born, God knew about you and the particular needs you would have. And because he created you, he fully understands each of those needs. That's one of the reasons God's Word offers help and hope for you.

Turn to the HelpFinder Index now and begin an exciting journey through the Bible that will offer answers to your deepest needs and questions. Use the *HelpFinder Bible* as a resource guide, a devotional Bible, or a topical tool kit, directing you to places where God's Word can touch you, heal you, and guide you. A lifetime of learning and adventure awaits as you search this Bible and discover how wonderfully our loving God meets your daily needs.

Features of the *HelpFinder Bible*

HELPFINDER INDEX

This is the most important feature in this Bible. Found at the back immediately after the book of Revelation, the HelpFinder Index makes it easy to discover what the Bible says about well over a hundred life-needs topics. Each topic is listed alphabetically and dealt with thoroughly, offering a biblical summary, several questions that help put your needs into words, a list of Bible passages to explore, and index application comments. The index also tells you which Bible passages have expanded notes in the Bible text and shows you a series of Bible promises related to each topic. In all, the HelpFinder Index thoroughly covers more than one hundred life-needs topics, gives links for many other related topics, and puts thousands of connected Bible verses and application notes at your fingertips.

IN-TEXT FEATURES

Application Notes

Hundreds of notes are placed at appropriate places in the Bible text and offer application, insights, inspiration, and encouragement. Each note focuses on one of the topics covered in the HelpFinder Index, and quite a few topics are dealt with in several notes. The page numbers for these in-text notes are listed in the HelpFinder Index (at the back of the Bible) and in the Quick Topic Finder (here at the front of the Bible).

Book Introductions

Complete Bible book introductions include the following helpful features:

- An overview of the book, emphasizing its core message and key themes
- An outline of the book that lists the main topics and where they can be found
- A list of key verses in the book

Promises from God

Knowing God's promises to us can deepen our faith, and the *HelpFinder Bible* highlights nearly two hundred of them. As you are reading, these promises draw your attention to important faith-building truths from God's Word. These and additional Bible promise texts are identified under each topic in the HelpFinder Index and the Quick Topic Finder.

OTHER HELPS AT THE FRONT AND BACK OF THE BIBLE***Quick Topic Finder***

This smaller index at the front of the Bible offers a bird's-eye view of all the topics covered in the HelpFinder Index and gives the page numbers in the HelpFinder Index where each topic is handled in much greater depth. The Quick Topic Finder also gives page numbers for the in-text application notes and offers additional Bible promise texts.

Great Bible Passages to Study and Memorize

This list points to some of the Bible's greatest passages and reflects on the importance of studying and memorizing longer Scripture texts to ensure that we keep the passages we read in their larger context.

Great Bible Stories for Discovering God's Truth

This list gives easy access to the great stories of the Bible and offers reflection on how God uses stories to reveal his truth and help us to connect it to our lives.

Quick Topic Finder

This is a quick reference guide to the main topics studied more in-depth in the HelpFinder Index at the front. This list gives you a quick bird's-eye view of the topics, the appropriate page number for finding the comprehensive study in the HelpFinder Index, a list of page numbers to locate in-text application notes on the topic, and direction for finding related promise verses.

Abandonment

See HelpFinder Index, page 1170

God's promises: Psalm 46:1, page 503;
John 14:16, page 970; 2 Corinthians 4:9,
page 1049; Hebrews 13:5, page 1120

Abilities

See HelpFinder Index, page 1181

See notes on pages 55, 307, 1023

God's promises: Matthew 25:29, page 888;
Mark 9:23, page 905

Abortion

See HelpFinder Index, page 1182

See notes on pages 11, 507, 553, 665

Absence

See HelpFinder Index, page 1190

God's promises: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, page 590;
Matthew 28:20, page 893

Absolutes See *Convictions; Truth*

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See notes on pages 584, 877, 1024

God's promises: Psalm 9:12, page 484;
Psalm 23:4, page 491

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See HelpFinder Index, page 1193

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See HelpFinder Index, page 1195

See notes on pages 1063, 1136

God's promise: John 8:36, page 962

Adoption

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God's promise: Ephesians 1:4-5, page 1065

Adversity

See HelpFinder Index, page 1212

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God's promises: Psalm 9:12, page 484;
Psalm 46:1, page 503; Matthew 11:28,
page 871; 1 Peter 5:7, page 1132

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God's promises: Psalm 32:8, page 495;
Proverbs 18:4, page 574

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568, 1068

God's promise: Psalm 103:8, page 533

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See notes on pages 44, 65, 67, 508, 866, 871

God's promises: Jeremiah 29:11, page 693;
John 16:33, page 972; 1 Peter 5:7,
page 1132

Appreciation See *Thankfulness*

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God's promise: Luke 19:10, page 943

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Balance

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God's promises: Psalm 127:2, page 548;
Matthew 6:33, page 866; Romans 12:4-5,
page 1023

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God's promises: Luke 11:27-28, page 933;
Romans 12:2, page 1023

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God's promises: Isaiah 54:10, page 651;
Romans 3:3, page 1014

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God's promises: Psalm 119:89, page 544;
Luke 11:28, page 933; 2 Timothy 3:16,
page 1099; Hebrews 8:10, page 1114

Bitterness

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God's promises: Isaiah 26:3, page 624;
Titus 1:15, page 1102

Blame

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God's promises: 1 Corinthians 1:8, page 1029;
Ephesians 1:4, page 1065; Colossians 1:22,
page 1079; Jude 1:24, page 1149

Blessings

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God's promises: Psalm 84:11, page 524;
Galatians 6:9, page 1063; Revelation 21:7,
page 1166

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God's promise: Isaiah 40:28-31, page 637

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God's promises: Psalm 23:2, page 491;
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God's promise: Psalm 5:11, page 482

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God's promises: Numbers 23:19, page 145;
2 Corinthians 5:17, page 1050

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God's promises: James 1:4, page 1122;
1 Timothy 4:12, 16, page 1093

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God's promise: Matthew 16:18, page 878

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God's promises: Psalm 34:18, page 496;
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God's promises: Isaiah 40:31, page 637;
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God's promises: Proverbs 10:20, page 566;
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God's promise: Psalm 72:12, page 517

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God's promise: Ephesians 6:11, page 1069

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God's promise: Matthew 5:9, page 864

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God's promise: Psalm 119:105, page 545

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 1 Peter 4:19, page 1132

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God's promise: Joshua 1:9, page 194

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God's promises: Ephesians 2:10, page 1066;
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God's promises: John 11:25, page 966;
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God's promises: Proverbs 3:6, page 561;
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God's promises: Acts 13:39, page 994;
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God's promise: Romans 8:5-6, page 1018

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God's promises: Psalm 1:1, page 481;
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God's promises: John 14:2, page 970;
1 Corinthians 2:9, page 1030

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God's promises: Genesis 18:14, page 17;
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God's promise: 1 Thessalonians 3:13,
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God's promise: Proverbs 12:19, page 569

Hope

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See notes on pages 693, 841, 1103

God's promises: Isaiah 25:8, page 623;
Jeremiah 29:11, page 693

Hospitality

See HelpFinder Index, page 1442

See notes on pages 933, 1097, 1155

God's promises: Matthew 25:35-36, page 888;
Hebrews 13:2, page 1120

Humility

See HelpFinder Index, page 1443

See notes on pages 331, 393, 411, 1002

God's promises: Isaiah 57:15, page 654;
Matthew 23:12, page 885

Hurry *See Burnout; Priorities; Purpose; Stress*

Hurting *See Grief; Pain; Suffering*

Immorality *See Character; Evil; Sin*

Impatience *See Patience*

Inferiority *See Rejection; Self-Esteem*

Insecurity *See Doubt; Fear; Salvation;
Self-Esteem*

Impossible *See Miracles*

Insignificance *See Self-Esteem*

Intimacy

See HelpFinder Index, page 1446

See notes on pages 481, 491, 563, 788, 838

God's promise: 1 Chronicles 28:9, page 380

Jealousy

See HelpFinder Index, page 1447

See notes on pages 189, 262, 999

God's promise: Proverbs 14:30, page 571

Joy *See Happiness; Hope*

Judging Others

See HelpFinder Index, page 1449

God's promises: Matthew 7:1, page 866;
1 Corinthians 4:5, page 1031

Judgment *See Justice*

Justice

See HelpFinder Index, page 1453

See notes on pages 156, 296, 725, 827, 865, 1156

God's promises: Psalm 58:11, page 510;
Romans 12:19, page 1024

Kindness *See Character; Compassion;
Friendship; Hospitality; Love; Neighbors;
Serving*

Laziness *See Excuses; Work*

Leadership

See HelpFinder Index, page 1456

See notes on pages 69, 410, 821, 1031

God's promises: Joshua 1:9, page 194;
Proverbs 3:5-6, page 561

Learning See *Maturity; Wisdom*

Leisure See *Rest; Work*

Lifestyle See *Character*

Limitations See *Mistakes; Strengths & Weaknesses*

Listening See *Communication*

Loneliness

See HelpFinder Index, page 1461

See notes on pages 57, 187, 651, 1146

God's promises: Psalm 23:4, page 491;

Hebrews 13:5, page 1120

Loss See *Grief; Pain*

Love

See HelpFinder Index, page 1463

See notes on pages 541, 977, 1041, 1067, 1139

God's promises: Isaiah 46:4, page 644;

Romans 8:39, page 1020

Lust

See HelpFinder Index, page 1466

See notes on pages 283, 864

God's promises: Philippians 4:8-9, page 1075;

James 1:14-15, page 1122

Marriage

See HelpFinder Index, page 1467

See notes on pages 312, 586, 593, 599, 855, 881, 1034

God's promise: Ephesians 5:31, page 1069

Materialism See *Giving; Money*

Maturity

See HelpFinder Index, page 1472

See notes on pages 1037, 1135

God's promises: Psalm 92:12-14, page 528;

Colossians 2:7, page 1079

Meditation See *Prayer; Worship*

Mercy & Grace

See HelpFinder Index, page 1474

See notes on pages 172, 525, 919, 1103, 1148

God's promises: Nehemiah 9:17, page 435;

Psalm 84:11, page 524; Psalm 103:8,

page 533; Zechariah 9:12, page 849

Miracles

See HelpFinder Index, page 1477

God's promises: Ephesians 3:20, page 1067;

Philippians 4:13, page 1075

Mistakes

See HelpFinder Index, page 1482

See note on page 890

God's promises: Romans 8:28, page 1019;

James 3:2, page 1124

Money

See HelpFinder Index, page 1485

See notes on pages 591, 652, 904, 942, 1076, 1094

God's promises: Matthew 6:31-33, page 866;

1 Timothy 6:17, page 1095

Morality See *Character; Maturity*

Mothers See *Family*

Motives

See HelpFinder Index, page 1488

See notes on pages 7, 373, 953

God's promise: Ezekiel 36:26, page 759

Mourning See *Grief*

Neighbors

See HelpFinder Index, page 1490

See note on page 1094

God's promise: James 2:8, page 1123

Obedience

See HelpFinder Index, page 1493

See notes on pages 81, 117, 167, 224, 816, 883, 971, 1059

God's promises: Psalm 1:1-3, page 481;

Hebrews 8:10, page 1114; James 1:25,

page 1123

Opportunities

See HelpFinder Index, page 1497

See notes on pages 46, 422, 989

God's promises: Matthew 25:29, page 888;

Revelation 3:8, page 1153

Opposition See *Adversity; Conflict; Enemies; Evil; Persecution; Spiritual Warfare*

Oppression See *Enemies; Justice; Persecution; Spiritual Warfare; Suffering*

Overcoming See *Future; Hope; Protection; Salvation*

Overwhelmed See *Adversity; Pain; Peace; Stress; Worry*

Pain

See HelpFinder Index, page 1500

See notes on pages 28, 913

God's promises: Psalm 31:7, page 495;

2 Corinthians 1:3, page 1046; Revelation 21:4,

page 1166

Panic

See HelpFinder Index, page 1505

God's promises: Psalm 75:3, page 518;

Isaiah 41:10, page 638; Zephaniah 3:17,

page 839; Colossians 1:16-17, 20, page 1078

Passions See *Desires; Lust*

Past See *Regrets*

Patience

See HelpFinder Index, page 1512
 See notes on pages 56, 255, 637, 833
God's promises: Isaiah 30:18, page 628;
 Proverbs 16:32, page 573

Peace

See HelpFinder Index, page 1514
 See notes on pages 93, 546, 624, 641
God's promises: Psalm 37:37, page 499;
 Isaiah 26:3, page 624; John 14:27, page 970

Perfection

See HelpFinder Index, page 1517
God's promises: Romans 3:23-24, page 1014;
 James 1:17, page 1122

Persecution

See HelpFinder Index, page 1524
 See notes on pages 971, 975, 987
God's promises: 2 Corinthians 1:5, page 1046;
 Revelation 2:10, page 1152

Planning

See HelpFinder Index, page 1526
 See note on page 428
God's promises: Proverbs 19:21, page 575;
 Ephesians 1:9-10, page 1065

Pollution *See Environment***Poor** *See Poverty***Potential** *See Hope; Opportunities***Poverty**

See HelpFinder Index, page 1530
 See notes on pages 117, 532
God's promises: Psalm 113:6-8, page 540;
 Proverbs 28:27, page 583

Prayer

See HelpFinder Index, page 1531
 See notes on pages 65, 347, 427, 428, 605, 896,
 909, 1019, 1073, 1075, 1142
God's promises: Psalm 57:2, page 509;
 Psalm 116:1-2, page 540; Psalm 118:5,
 page 541; Psalm 145:18, page 555

Presence of God

See HelpFinder Index, page 1534
 See notes on pages 37, 84, 131, 259, 552, 693,
 828, 836, 963
God's promises: Psalm 145:18, page 555;
 Matthew 28:20, page 893

Pressure *See Adversity; Conflict; Stress***Pretending**

See HelpFinder Index, page 1538
 See note on page 1124
God's promises: Psalm 37:37, page 499;
 James 3:17, page 1124

Pride

See HelpFinder Index, page 1541
 See notes on pages 484, 751, 812, 989,
 1026
God's promises: Psalm 18:27, page 488;
 Matthew 23:12, page 885

Priorities

See HelpFinder Index, page 1543
 See notes on pages 169, 234, 700
God's promise: Proverbs 3:6, page 561

Problems *See Adversity; Conflict***Protection**

See HelpFinder Index, page 1545
 See notes on pages 454, 487, 705, 775, 779,
 973, 992, 1016

Provision

See HelpFinder Index, page 1547
 See notes on pages 67, 959

Purpose

See HelpFinder Index, page 1548
 See note on page 595
God's promises: Psalm 57:2, page 509;
 Romans 12:2, page 1023;
 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, page 1086

Quarreling *See Communication; Conflict***Quitting**

See HelpFinder Index, page 1551
 See notes on pages 135, 197, 430
God's promises: Matthew 10:22, page 870;
 Galatians 6:9, page 1063

Racism & Prejudice

See HelpFinder Index, page 1553
 See notes on pages 445, 1080
God's promise: Galatians 3:28, page 1061

Regrets

See HelpFinder Index, page 1573
 See notes on pages 228, 891
God's promises: Romans 4:6-8, page 1015;
 2 Corinthians 7:10, page 1051

Rejection

See HelpFinder Index, page 1576
 See notes on pages 650, 963

Relationships *See Communication; Friendship; Marriage; Neighbors***Repentance**

See HelpFinder Index, page 1577
 See notes on pages 60, 756, 862
God's promises: Jeremiah 3:22, page 668;
 Acts 2:38, page 982

Reputation

See HelpFinder Index, page 1578

See notes on pages 897, 1053

Rest

See HelpFinder Index, page 1579

See notes on pages 5, 456, 1055

God's promises: Psalm 145:14, page 555;

Matthew 11:28, page 871

Reverence See *Holiness; Worship*

Right & Wrong See *Truth*

Righteousness See *Character; Faith; Salvation*

Sadness See *Depression; Encouragement*

Salvation

See HelpFinder Index, page 1582

See notes on pages 9, 98, 108, 507, 876, 955, 983, 1051, 1067, 1115, 1167

God's promises: Isaiah 1:18, page 605;

Acts 16:31, page 998

Self-Care

See HelpFinder Index, page 1586

God's promises: Psalm 23:1-4, page 491;

Isaiah 41:10, page 638; Matthew 6:26-33, page 866; Philippians 4:6-7, page 1075

Self-Centeredness See *Pride*

Self-Control

See HelpFinder Index, page 1595

See notes on pages 1037, 1135

God's promises: James 1:12, page 1122;

2 Peter 1:5-8, page 1134

Self-Esteem

See HelpFinder Index, page 1597

See notes on pages 222, 294, 484, 871, 893

God's promises: Psalm 8:4-5, page 483;

Zechariah 4:10, page 846

Self-Righteousness See *Pride*

Selfishness

See HelpFinder Index, page 1600

See notes on pages 26, 863, 907, 937, 1140

God's promise: Matthew 16:25, page 878

Serving

See HelpFinder Index, page 1601

See notes on pages 124, 364, 889, 969, 1039

God's promise: Matthew 16:25, page 878

Sexuality

See HelpFinder Index, page 1603

See notes on pages 179, 600, 601, 877

God's promise: Hebrews 13:4, page 1120

Sharing See *Friendship; Giving; Serving*

Sickness See *Healing*

Significance See *Self-Esteem*

Sin

See HelpFinder Index, page 1610

See notes on pages 93, 110, 125, 198, 572, 674, 731, 1016

God's promises: Isaiah 1:18, page 605;

Romans 6:23, page 1017

Singleness

See HelpFinder Index, page 1614

See note on page 1035

God's promise: Philippians 4:19, page 1076

Sorrow See *Betrayal; Comfort; Death; Encouragement; Grief; Regrets*

Spiritual Gifts See *Abilities; Strengths & Weaknesses*

Spiritual Warfare

See HelpFinder Index, page 1616

See notes on pages 418, 1070

God's promise: Ephesians 6:11, page 1069

Status See *Pride; Self-Esteem*

Stewardship See *Accountability; Giving; Leadership; Money*

Strengths & Weaknesses

See HelpFinder Index, page 1618

See note on page 1055

God's promises: Zechariah 4:6, page 846;

Ephesians 3:20, page 1067

Stress

See HelpFinder Index, page 1621

See notes on pages 44, 67, 508, 871

God's promise: John 16:33, page 972

Stubbornness See *Pride*

Success

See HelpFinder Index, page 1623

See notes on pages 301, 702, 899

God's promises: Psalm 60:12, page 511;

Psalm 84:11, page 524

Suffering

See HelpFinder Index, page 1626

See notes on pages 455, 548, 697, 1129

God's promises: Psalm 147:3, page 556;

2 Corinthians 1:5, page 1046; 2 Timothy 2:10, page 1098

Sympathy See *Compassion; Encouragement; Forgiveness; Judging Others*

Talents See *Abilities; Purpose; Strengths & Weaknesses*

Temper See *Anger*

Temptation

See HelpFinder Index, page 1629

See notes on pages 6, 38, 772, 1037, 1111

God's promises: Psalm 1:1, page 481;

2 Thessalonians 3:3, page 1089

Tension See *Conflict*

Terrorism

See HelpFinder Index, page 1632

God's promise: Isaiah 41:10, page 638

Thankfulness

See HelpFinder Index, page 1633

See notes on pages 53, 529, 1081

God's promises: 1 Chronicles 16:34, page 370;

Colossians 2:7, page 1079

Thoughts See *Character; Motives; Temptation*

Time See *Future; Planning; Priorities*

Tired See *Rest*

Tithing See *Giving; Money*

Traditions See *Celebration; Family*

Tragedy See *Adversity; Grief; Suffering*

Trouble See *Adversity; Conflict*

Trust See *Accountability; Character; Commitment; Faithfulness; Honesty & Integrity; Love; Vulnerability*

Truth

See HelpFinder Index, page 1636

See notes on pages 974, 984, 1068

God's promises: Proverbs 12:19, page 569;

2 Timothy 3:16, page 1099; 1 Peter 3:10, page 1131

Unfaithfulness See *Betrayal; Sexuality; Sin*

Unity & Teamwork

See HelpFinder Index, page 1642

See notes on pages 179, 550, 582, 901, 1039

God's promises: Psalm 133:1, page 550;

Ecclesiastes 4:12, page 590

Unselfishness See *Compassion; Giving*

Values See *Character; Convictions; Truth*

Victory See *Enemies; Future; Salvation; Spiritual Warfare*

Vision See *Leadership; Planning; Priorities; Purpose*

Vulnerability

See HelpFinder Index, page 1646

See notes on pages 1047, 1125

God's promises: Psalm 12:5, page 485;

Proverbs 5:21, page 563; Romans 5:6, page 1016

Waiting See *Patience*

Wants See *Desires*

Wealth See *Giving; Money*

Weariness See *Depression; Rest; Stress*

Willpower See *Commitment; Convictions; Faithfulness; Temptation*

Will of God

See HelpFinder Index, page 1650

See notes on pages 242, 329, 446, 791, 1003, 1074, 1159

God's promises: Proverbs 3:6, page 561;

Ephesians 1:11, page 1065

Wisdom

See HelpFinder Index, page 1653

See notes on pages 544, 562

God's promises: Proverbs 1:23, page 560;

James 1:5, page 1122

Witnessing

See HelpFinder Index, page 1656

See notes on pages 929, 964, 1013, 1083, 1130

God's promises: Daniel 12:3, page 785;

Luke 12:8, page 935

Word of God See *Bible*

Work

See HelpFinder Index, page 1660

See note on page 1063

God's promises: Psalm 145:14, page 555;

Philippians 1:6, page 1072

Worry

See HelpFinder Index, page 1663

See notes on pages 65, 866

God's promise: 1 Peter 5:7, page 1132

Worship

See HelpFinder Index, page 1665

See notes on pages 99, 106, 368, 530, 554, 807, 861, 907, 1041

God's promises: Psalm 31:21, page 495;

2 Thessalonians 1:10, page 1088

Worth See *Dignity; Equality; Racism & Prejudice; Self-Esteem*

A Note to Readers

The *Holy Bible, New Living Translation* (NLT) is one of the best-known Bible translations in the English-speaking world. The NLT is the result of many years of work by a committee of top biblical scholars and linguists. The NLT Bible Translation Committee (BTC) was first commissioned in the late 1980s. The BTC scholars were committed to creating a fresh Bible translation that was both accurate and understandable. For over eight years this committee of twelve worked hand in hand with over ninety additional scholars to carefully craft the translation using the best Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts. They incorporated the latest linguistic and cultural insights to create a translation that is profoundly accurate without sacrificing readability.

The goal of the BTC was to convey to contemporary readers the meaning and content of the ancient texts as accurately and clearly as possible. The result is a translation that seeks to communicate as powerfully to people today as the original texts communicated to readers and listeners in the biblical world. Since written copies were scarce in the ancient world, people regularly received Scripture by listening to it as it was read aloud. Therefore, the NLT translation process included reading the text aloud to ensure that it would communicate effectively and beautifully, whether read in public or in private. The NLT is the result of an exacting scholarly translation process, designed to ensure that it is accurate, understandable, and audibly enjoyable for all uses—from sermons to teaching to serious Bible study to group discussions to everyday reading for all ages and stages of life.

The New Living Translation communicates God’s word powerfully to all who read or hear it. Our continuous prayer is that God uses it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world.

The Publishers

Introduction to the New Living Translation

Translation Philosophy and Methodology

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the

words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

Translation Process and Team

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English. To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. (These scholars are listed at the end of this introduction.) Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the

process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text's easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, with minor changes subsequently introduced in 2007, 2013, and 2015.

Written to Be Read Aloud

It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

The Texts behind the New Living Translation

The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most

part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

Translation Issues

The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for example, “ephah” [a unit of dry volume] or “cubit” [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today’s readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.
- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, “ten shekels of silver” becomes “ten pieces of silver” to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the “denarius” as “the normal daily wage” to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: “Greek *a denarius*, the payment for a full day’s labor.” In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.
- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear

ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: “the third day of the month Adar.” This was during the sixth year of King Darius’s reign (that is, 515 B.C.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 B.C.

- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.
- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’” The accompanying footnote reads: “*Moses* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’”

Sometimes, when the actual meaning of a name is clear, that meaning is included in parentheses within the text itself. For example, the text at Genesis 16:11 reads: “You are to name him Ishmael (*which means ‘God hears’*), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress.” Since the original hearers and readers would have instantly understood the meaning of the name “Ishmael,” we have provided modern readers with the same information so they can experience the text in a similar way.

- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose

to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home *in deep sorrow*.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek *went home beating their breasts*.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home beating their breasts *in sorrow*.” If we had done this, we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.

- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, “Your neck is *like* the tower of David” (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it “Your neck is *as beautiful as* the tower of David” to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: “Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly.” We have rendered it: “Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.” We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.
- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.
- The Greek term *hoi Ioudaioi* is literally translated “the Jews” in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in

these different contexts by using terms such as “the people” (with a footnote: Greek *the Jewish people*) or “the Jewish leaders,” where appropriate.

- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called “brothers” (*adelphoi*). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as “brothers and sisters” in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” We have rendered it: “Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it.” At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him.” We have rendered it: “If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead.”

We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, “Father”) have been maintained without exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

Lexical Consistency in Terminology

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently,

especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

The Spelling of Proper Names

Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it “Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

The Rendering of Divine Names

In the Old Testament, all appearances of *’el*, *’elohim*, or *’eloah* have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation

“god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (*YHWH*) consistently as “the LORD,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name *’adonai*, which we render “Lord.” When *’adonai* and *YHWH* appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign LORD.” When *’elohim* and *YHWH* appear together, we have rendered it “LORD God.” When *YH* (the short form of *YHWH*) and *YHWH* appear together, we have rendered it “LORD GOD.” When *YHWH* appears with the term *tseba’oth*, we have rendered it “LORD of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, *Yahweh*, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the Gospels and Acts, the Greek word *christos* has normally been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed (which is consistently the case in the Epistles and Revelation), *christos* has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word *kurios* is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “LORD” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes

The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all designated in the text with an asterisk:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “Hebrew,” “Aramaic,” or “Greek,” identifying the language of the underlying source text. For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Greek *the breaking of bread*.”
- Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.”

These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered *leprosy*. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”

- When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the *Textus Receptus* (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.
- All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Psalms 8:2; 53:3; Proverbs 3:12).
- Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the

reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, “King Herod” is named in this translation as “King Herod Agrippa” and is identified in a footnote as being “the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.”

- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name “Eve” at Genesis 3:20 reads: “*Eve* sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to give life.’” This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve “would be the mother of all who live.”

AS WE SUBMIT this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God’s word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God’s guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God’s word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

The Bible Translation Committee

Bible Translation Team

HOLY BIBLE, NEW LIVING TRANSLATION

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Wheaton College

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OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis

IN THE BEGINNING — *the beginning of all beginnings—everything was fresher than the earliest morning and newer than a baby’s next breath. God spoke, and new worlds emerged. God breathed, and new life began. God created, and a new garden grew with pristine purity. A new dynamic called love and marriage blossomed in that garden, and it would lead to a new wonder called children and family. A new utopia had begun. The whole wide universe, and the tiny corner called Eden, was bathed in honeymoon freshness. It was the dawn of all things wonderful, the dawn of everything bright and beautiful.*

Genesis is the book of new beginnings—new, wonderful beginnings. But it is also the book of new beginnings that were far less than wonderful because of another new dynamic called choice. God gave his creatures the ability to choose the course their lives would take, and they did not choose wisely. And so began the dark presence of the evil one, the dark shadow called temptation, and the dark woundedness called sin.

Many today are tired of the same old thing—the same job, the same routines, the same responsibilities, the same load of debt, the same limitations, the same sickness or injury, perhaps even the sameness in marriage or family life. If only we could choose a new course in life. If only we could get away from it all, perhaps even get away from everyone and everything familiar—out of debt, out of the neighborhood, out of the chains of sameness. If only we could jump-start a new tomorrow today.

In our quest for newness, many jump ship, leaving home and family behind, just to find that the new beginning is only the other side of the same old coin. Old oppression is exchanged for new oppression. Old problems are bartered for new ones until it seems that the new is worse than the old.

When we embark on a new beginning, how do we know which way it will take us? Genesis is the book to study for answers. It lays out the principles for new beginnings (new relationships, new rules, new jobs, new directions) within the boundaries of God’s timeless and unchanging truths for successful

What you will be reading about

1:1–2:25

How God created the world

3:1–5:32

How sin entered the world

6:1–11:32

The story of Noah and the ark

12:1–25:18

The story of Abraham

25:19–28:9

The story of Isaac

28:10–36:43

The story of Jacob

37:1–50:26

The story of Joseph

living. Newness will always be exciting, and ultimately satisfying, if we stay within the guidelines for living that are laid down by God in this book and in the rest of the Bible. You will then find your beginnings as fresh and bright as the dawn of creation. But new beginnings without God—outside his guidelines for living—will be as dark and devastating as the expulsion from Eden, which led to a new world of pain, work, sweat, and sin.

Read the book of Genesis to gain a new perspective on what appear to be the same old things. Let the tyranny of the ordinary become fresh and vital. When you do chart a new beginning in your life, use the guidelines for new beginnings presented in Genesis. Then you will have renewed hope and zest with each new morning by running with God, not from him.

Key verses in Genesis

1:1 *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

1:27 *So God created human beings in his own image . . . male and female he created them.*

9:12-17 *Then God said, "I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living*

creatures, for all generations to come. I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. . . . Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. . . . Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth."

15:6 *And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted*

him as righteous because of his faith.

18:14 *"Is anything too hard for the LORD?"*

26:24 *"Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you."*

50:20 *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good."*

The Account of Creation

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* ²The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

³Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day" and the darkness "night."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.

⁶Then God said, "Let there be a space between the waters, to separate the waters of the heavens from the waters of the earth." ⁷And that is what happened. God made this space to separate the waters of the earth from the waters of the heavens. ⁸God called the space "sky."

And evening passed and morning came, marking the second day.

⁹Then God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear." And that is what happened.

¹⁰God called the dry ground "land" and the waters "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹Then God said, "Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit.

These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And that is what happened. ¹²The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants, and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

¹³And evening passed and morning came, marking the third day.

¹⁴Then God said, "Let lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them be signs to mark the seasons, days, and years.

¹⁵Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth." And that is what happened.

¹⁶God made two great lights—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars.

¹⁷God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.

²⁰Then God said, "Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind." ²¹So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that scurries and swarms in the water, and

1:1 Or *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, . . . Or When God began to create the heavens and the earth, . . .*

every sort of bird—each producing offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²Then God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply. Let the fish fill the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth.”

²³And evening passed and morning came, marking the fifth day.

²⁴Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. ²⁵God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make human beings* in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth,* and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁷ So God created human beings* in his own image.

In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

²⁸Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

²⁹Then God said, “Look! I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.

³⁰And I have given every green plant as food for all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—everything that has life.” And that is what happened.

³¹Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

And evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day.

2 So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. ²On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested* from all his work. ³And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

⁴This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

1:26a Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*. **1:26b** As in Syriac version; Hebrew reads *all the earth*. **1:27** Or *the man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. **2:2** Or *ceased*; also in 2:3. **2:6** Or *mist*. **2:19** Or *Adam*, and so throughout the chapter.

The Man and Woman in Eden

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, ⁵neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil. ⁶Instead, springs* came up from the ground and watered all the land. ⁷Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person.

⁸Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made. ⁹The LORD God made all sorts of trees grow up from the ground—trees that were beautiful and that produced delicious fruit. In the middle of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. ¹¹The first branch, called the Pishon, flowed around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. ¹²The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. ¹³The second branch, called the Gihon, flowed around the entire land of Cush. ¹⁴The third branch, called the Tigris, flowed east of the land of Asshur. The fourth branch is called the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. ¹⁶But the LORD God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—¹⁷except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”

¹⁸Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” ¹⁹So the LORD God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man* to see what he would call them, and the man

• Rest

GENESIS 2:1-3

Why would the omnipotent God of the universe rest following his work of creation? Surely it wasn’t because the Almighty was physically tired! Our clue is that God, in ceasing from his work, called his rest “holy.” God also knew that we would need to cease from our work to care for our spiritual needs. Work is good, but it must be balanced by regular attention to worship and the health of our souls. Do you observe regular times for worship and spiritual refreshment?

• Sexuality

GENESIS 2:24

When the unity candle is lit at a wedding, it symbolizes a unique relationship—leaving father and mother and joining as bride and groom in such a way that the two become one. We don't fully understand sexual union, but we do know that God intended it to bond married people together in a way different from any other relationship. This physical intimacy is designed to be experienced exclusively and uniquely within a marriage between a man and a woman, and it is a model of the vulnerability and unity that should be experienced in all other aspects of marriage.

Our fallen world has come to view sex simply as an act of pleasure rather than a doorway to deepest vulnerability and sharing. That is why sex outside of marriage is so wrong: It destroys the proper view and function of sex as the ultimate act of intimacy that two people can experience together. A casual view of sex devalues it and takes away one of the most powerful channels of communication between a husband and wife. When sex is seen simply as a physical act, it loses its power to bond two people together. Lack of intimacy is one of the great destroyers of a marriage. Use all of the resources God has given you to keep sex alive in your marriage, functioning as it was designed to function.

• Temptation

GENESIS 3:1-6

The first key to understanding temptation is recognizing the power and cunning of the tempter. Notice that the serpent does not approach Eve with something obviously evil but with a lovely piece of fruit. He then twists God's command just enough to make it seem to Eve as if God didn't really mean what he had commanded. Hidden behind these obvious "benefits" was the lie that Eve could become like God by violating God's specific command. How often Satan uses this deceptive strategy with us! How does Satan most often employ temptation in your life? Pray that God will help you cling to his will and recognize the lies of the one who would destroy your soul.

chose a name for each one. ²⁰He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs* and closed up the opening. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

²³"At last!" the man exclaimed.

"This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called 'woman,'
because she was taken from 'man.'"

²⁴This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

²⁵Now the man and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

The Man and Woman Sin

3 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the LORD God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

²"Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. ³"It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'"

⁴"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

⁶The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

⁸When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man* and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

¹¹"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

¹²The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it."

¹³Then the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

2:21 Or *took a part of the man's side.* 3:8 Or *Adam,* and so throughout the chapter.

“The serpent deceived me,” she replied.
“That’s why I ate it.”

¹⁴Then the LORD God said to the serpent,

“Because you have done this, you are
cursed
more than all animals, domestic
and wild.

You will crawl on your belly,
groveling in the dust as long as you live.

¹⁵ And I will cause hostility between you and
the woman,
and between your offspring and her
offspring.

He will strike* your head,
and you will strike his heel.”

¹⁶Then he said to the woman,

“I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy,
and in pain you will give birth.

And you will desire to control your
husband,
but he will rule over you.*”

¹⁷And to the man he said,

“Since you listened to your wife and ate
from the tree

whose fruit I commanded you not to eat,
the ground is cursed because of you.

All your life you will struggle to scratch a
living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you,
though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow
will you have food to eat
until you return to the ground
from which you were made.

For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return.”

Paradise Lost: God’s Judgment

²⁰Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve,
because she would be the mother of all who
live.* ²¹And the LORD God made clothing from
animal skins for Adam and his wife.

²²Then the LORD God said, “Look, the human
beings* have become like us, knowing both
good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit
from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will
live forever!” ²³So the LORD God banished them
from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam
out to cultivate the ground from which he had
been made. ²⁴After sending them out, the LORD
God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of
the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming
sword that flashed back and forth to guard the
way to the tree of life.

3:15 Or bruise; also in 3:15b. 3:16 Or And though you will have desire for your husband, / he will rule over you. 3:20 Eve sounds like a Hebrew term that means “to give life.” 3:22 Or the man; Hebrew reads ha-adam. 4:1a Or the man; also in 4:25. 4:1b Or I have acquired. Cain sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean “produce” or “acquire.”

Cain and Abel

4 Now Adam* had sexual relations with his
wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When
she gave birth to Cain, she said, “With the LORD’s
help, I have produced* a man!” ²Later she gave
birth to his brother and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shep-
herd, while Cain cultivated the ground. ³When
it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some

• Family

GENESIS 4:1

The last chapter of the creation story is still going on. God isn’t through yet with his creative process, for in each conception and birth, he teams up with man and woman to create new life. There is something in the sexual act that goes far beyond the pleasure of the act itself, something that is a blending and bonding of not only husband and wife but God also, for his divine creative process makes conception and birth possible. In creating a child together, a couple has joined God in bringing a living soul into the world. This is proof enough that sex in marriage should be celebrated as holy, not as shameful or merely something to be endured.

• Motives

GENESIS 4:3-5

Your motives are everything to God. The condition of your heart is essential to the condition of your relationship with him. Coming to God out of obligation, or just to keep him from getting angry at you, or to placate him to get something you really want shows that you want a relationship with God for the wrong reasons. Coming to God with a humble desire to know him and what he wants for you is more about loving and pleasing him than yourself. It is quite likely that God rejected Cain’s sacrifice because Cain’s motives were self-centered. When your motives are selfish, even seemingly right behavior can become inappropriate. Don’t let right actions be wasted by wrong motives. You will soon find your actions to be futile. But right motives always produce meaningful action, even in the smallest things. More important, when you pursue spiritual life with self-serving motives, you rob yourself of the joy God intends.

of his crops as a gift to the LORD. ⁴Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his gift, ⁵but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain very angry, and he looked dejected.

⁶“Why are you so angry?” the LORD asked Cain. “Why do you look so dejected? ⁷You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.”

⁸One day Cain suggested to his brother, “Let’s go out into the fields.”* And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother, Abel, and killed him.

⁹Afterward the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don’t know,” Cain responded. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

¹⁰But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! ¹¹Now you are cursed and banished from the ground, which has swallowed your brother’s blood. ¹²No longer will the ground yield good crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless wanderer on the earth.”

¹³Cain replied to the LORD, “My punishment* is too great for me to bear! ¹⁴You have banished me from the land and from your presence; you have made me a homeless wanderer. Anyone who finds me will kill me!”

¹⁵The LORD replied, “No, for I will give a sevenfold punishment to anyone who kills you.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. ¹⁶So Cain left the LORD’s presence and settled in the land of Nod,* east of Eden.

The Descendants of Cain

¹⁷Cain had sexual relations with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain founded a city, which he named Enoch, after his son. ¹⁸Enoch had a son named Irad. Irad became the father of* Mehujael. Mehujael became the father of Methushael. Methushael became the father of Lamech.

¹⁹Lamech married two women. The first was named Adah, and the second was Zillah.

²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal, who was the first of those who raise livestock and live in tents. ²¹His brother’s name was Jubal, the first of all who play the harp and flute. ²²Lamech’s other wife, Zillah, gave birth to a son named Tubal-cain. He became an expert in forging tools of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah.

²³One day Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
listen to me, you wives of Lamech.

I have killed a man who attacked me,
a young man who wounded me.

²⁴ If someone who kills Cain is punished seven times,
then the one who kills me will be punished seventy-seven times!”

The Birth of Seth

²⁵Adam had sexual relations with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him Seth,* for she said, “God has granted me another son in place of Abel, whom Cain killed.” ²⁶When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. At that time people first began to worship the LORD by name.

The Descendants of Adam

5 This is the written account of the descendants of Adam. When God created human beings,* he made them to be like himself. ²He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.”

³When Adam was 130 years old, he became the father of a son who was just like him—in his very image. He named his son Seth.

⁴After the birth of Seth, Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵Adam lived 930 years, and then he died.

⁶When Seth was 105 years old, he became the father of* Enosh. ⁷After the birth of* Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁸Seth lived 912 years, and then he died.

⁹When Enosh was 90 years old, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹¹Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.

¹²When Kenan was 70 years old, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters.

¹⁴Kenan lived 910 years, and then he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel was 65 years old, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived another 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Mahalalel lived 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸When Jared was 162 years old, he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Jared lived 962 years, and then he died.

²¹When Enoch was 65 years old, he became

4:8 As in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, and Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks “Let’s go out into the fields.” 4:13 Or *My sin*. 4:16 *Nod* means “wandering.” 4:18 Or the ancestor of, and so throughout the verse. 4:25 *Seth* probably means “granted”; the name may also mean “appointed.” 5:1 Or *man*; Hebrew reads *adam*; similarly in 5:2. 5:6 Or the ancestor of; also in 5:9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25. 5:7 Or the birth of this ancestor of; also in 5:10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26.

the father of Methuselah. ²²After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived in close fellowship with God for another 300 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²³Enoch lived 365 years, ²⁴walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him.

²⁵When Methuselah was 187 years old, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Methuselah lived 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸When Lamech was 182 years old, he became the father of a son. ²⁹Lamech named his son Noah, for he said, “May he bring us relief* from our work and the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed.” ³⁰After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived another 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters. ³¹Lamech lived 777 years, and then he died.

³²After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

A World Gone Wrong

6 Then the people began to multiply on the earth, and daughters were born to them. ²The sons of God saw the beautiful women* and took any they wanted as their wives. ³Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not put up with* humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, their normal lifespan will be no more than 120 years.”

⁴In those days, and for some time after, giant Nephilites lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes and famous warriors of ancient times.

⁵The LORD observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ⁶So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them and put them on the earth. It broke his heart. ⁷And the LORD said, “I will wipe this human race I have created from the face of the earth. Yes, and I will destroy every living thing—all the people, the large animals, the small animals that scurry along the ground, and even the birds of the sky. I am sorry I ever made them.” ⁸But Noah found favor with the LORD.

The Story of Noah

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless person living on earth at the time, and he

5:29 Noah sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean “relief” or “comfort.” 6:2 Hebrew *daughters of men*; also in 6:4. 6:3 Greek version reads *will not remain in*. 6:14a Traditionally rendered *an ark*. 6:14b Or *gopher wood*. 6:15 Hebrew *300 cubits* [138 meters] *long, 50 cubits* [23 meters] *wide, and 30 cubits* [13.8 meters] *high*. 6:16 Hebrew *an opening of 1 cubit* [46 centimeters].

walked in close fellowship with God. ¹⁰Noah was the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now God saw that the earth had become corrupt and was filled with violence. ¹²God observed all this corruption in the world, for everyone on earth was corrupt. ¹³So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!

¹⁴“Build a large boat* from cypress wood* and waterproof it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. ¹⁵Make the boat 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.* ¹⁶Leave an 18-inch opening* below the roof all the way around the boat. Put the door on the side, and build three decks inside the boat—lower, middle, and upper.

¹⁷“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing that breathes. Everything on earth will die. ¹⁸But I will confirm my covenant with you. So enter the boat—you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁹Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. ²⁰Pairs of every kind of bird, and every kind of animal, and every kind of small animal that scurries along the ground, will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹And be sure to take on board enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

²²So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

• Salvation

GENESIS 6:5-22

The account of Noah should take us beyond the image of cuddly animals in a big boat; it is a graphic tale of evil, judgment, and destruction. The story begins with God’s judgment of humankind’s depravity. The Flood pictures both the relentlessness of God’s wrath against all sin as well as humankind’s floundering in its own wickedness. The ark, provided by God through Noah’s obedient faith, becomes a striking illustration of God’s gracious salvation. The entire story prefigures God’s ultimate saving vessel, Jesus Christ, who receives not just one family but all who will come to him in faith. Have you made the decision to climb on board, or are you still outside treading water in the rising tide?

The Flood Covers the Earth

7 When everything was ready, the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I can see that you alone are righteous. ²Take with you seven pairs—male and female—of each animal I have approved for eating and for sacrifice,* and take one pair of each of the others. ³Also take seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that all life will survive on the earth after the flood. ⁴Seven days from now I will make the rains pour down on the earth. And it will rain for forty days and forty nights, until I have wiped from the earth all the living things I have created.”

⁵So Noah did everything as the LORD commanded him.

— PROMISES —
from God

*“I will never again destroy
all living things. As long
as the earth remains,
there will be planting and
harvest, cold and heat,
summer and winter,
day and night.”*

GENESIS 8:21-22

⁶Noah was 600 years old when the flood covered the earth. ⁷He went on board the boat to escape the flood—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. ⁸With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and for sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and the small animals that scurry along the ground. ⁹They entered the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰After seven days, the waters of the flood came and covered the earth.

¹¹When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, all the underground waters erupted from the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. ¹²The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights.

¹³That very day Noah had gone into the boat with his wife and his sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. ¹⁴With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds of every kind. ¹⁵Two by two they came into

the boat, representing every living thing that breathes. ¹⁶A male and female of each kind entered, just as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD closed the door behind them.

¹⁷For forty days the floodwaters grew deeper, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. ¹⁸As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. ¹⁹Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, ²⁰rising more than twenty-two feet* above the highest peaks. ²¹All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the people. ²²Everything that breathed and lived on dry land died. ²³God wiped out every living thing on the earth—people, livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and the birds of the sky. All were destroyed. The only people who survived were Noah and those with him in the boat. ²⁴And the floodwaters covered the earth for 150 days.

The Flood Recedes

8 But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and livestock with him in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the earth, and the floodwaters began to recede. ²The underground waters stopped flowing, and the torrential rains from the sky were stopped. ³So the floodwaters gradually receded from the earth. After 150 days, ⁴exactly five months from the time the flood began,* the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵Two and a half months later,* as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks became visible.

⁶After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat ⁷and released a raven. The bird flew back and forth until the floodwaters on the earth had dried up. ⁸He also released a dove to see if the water had receded and it could find dry ground. ⁹But the dove could find no place to land because the water still covered the ground. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. ¹⁰After waiting another seven days, Noah released the dove again. ¹¹This time the dove returned to him in the evening with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the floodwaters were almost gone. ¹²He waited another seven days and then released the dove again. This time it did not come back.

¹³Noah was now 601 years old. On the first day of the new year, ten and a half months after the flood began,* the floodwaters had almost dried up from the earth. Noah lifted back the covering of the boat and saw that the surface

7:2 Hebrew of each clean animal; similarly in 7:8. 7:20 Hebrew 15 cubits [6.9 meters]. 8:4 Hebrew on the seventeenth day of the seventh month; see 7:11. 8:5 Hebrew On the first day of the tenth month; see 7:11 and note on 8:4. 8:13 Hebrew On the first day of the first month; see 7:11.

of the ground was drying. ¹⁴Two more months went by,* and at last the earth was dry!

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶“Leave the boat, all of you—you and your wife, and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷Release all the animals—the birds, the livestock, and the small animals that scurry along the ground—so they can be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth.”

¹⁸So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. ¹⁹And all of the large and small animals and birds came out of the boat, pair by pair.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and there he sacrificed as burnt offerings the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose.* ²¹And the LORD was pleased with the aroma of the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of the human race, even though everything they think or imagine is bent toward evil from childhood. I will never again destroy all living things. ²²As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.”

God Confirms His Covenant

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. ²All the animals of the earth, all the birds of the sky, all the small animals that scurry along the ground, and all the fish in the sea will look on you with fear and terror. I have placed them in your power. ³I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. ⁴But you must never eat any meat that still has the lifeblood in it.

⁵“And I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person’s life. If a wild animal kills a person, it must die. And anyone who murders a fellow human must die. ⁶If anyone takes a human life, that person’s life will also be taken by human hands. For God made human beings* in his own image. ⁷Now be fruitful and multiply, and repopulate the earth.”

⁸Then God told Noah and his sons, ⁹“I hereby confirm my covenant with you and your descendants, ¹⁰and with all the animals that were on the boat with you—the birds, the livestock, and all the wild animals—every living creature on earth. ¹¹Yes, I am confirming my covenant with you. Never again will floodwaters kill all living creatures; never again will a flood destroy the earth.”

¹²Then God said, “I am giving you a sign of my covenant with you and with all living creatures, for all generations to come. ¹³I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my covenant with you and with all the earth. ¹⁴When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will appear in

the clouds, ¹⁵and I will remember my covenant with you and with all living creatures. Never again will the floodwaters destroy all life. ¹⁶When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.” ¹⁷Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this rainbow is the sign of the covenant I am confirming with all the creatures on earth.”

Noah’s Sons

¹⁸The sons of Noah who came out of the boat with their father were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham is the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹From these three sons of Noah came all the people who now populate the earth.

²⁰After the flood, Noah began to cultivate the ground, and he planted a vineyard. ²¹One day he drank some wine he had made, and he became drunk and lay naked inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. ²³Then Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, and backed into the tent to cover their father. As they did this, they looked the other way so they would not see him naked.

²⁴When Noah woke up from his stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. ²⁵Then he cursed Canaan, the son of Ham:

“May Canaan be cursed!

May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives.”

²⁶Then Noah said,

“May the LORD, the God of Shem, be blessed, and may Canaan be his servant!

²⁷ May God expand the territory of Japheth! May Japheth share the prosperity of Shem,* and may Canaan be his servant.”

²⁸Noah lived another 350 years after the great flood. ²⁹He lived 950 years, and then he died.

• Abortion

GENESIS 9:6

The Bible makes it clear that murder, killing another person, is a sin. One of God’s Ten Commandments is a prohibition against murder (Exodus 20:13). In the abortion debate, the question becomes, Is the unborn child really a person yet? If the unborn child is a person, then aborting that child becomes murder. Murder carries such grave consequences because it ends a human life that still holds so much potential, and it puts authority over human life into our hands rather than leaving it in God’s hands.

^{8:14} Hebrew *The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived*; see note on 8:13. ^{8:20} Hebrew *every clean animal and every clean bird*. ^{9:6} Or *man*; Hebrew reads *ha-adam*. ^{9:27} Hebrew *May he live in the tents of Shem*.

10 This is the account of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the great flood.

Descendants of Japheth

²The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.* ⁵Their descendants became the seafaring peoples that spread out to various lands, each identified by its own language, clan, and national identity.

Descendants of Ham

⁶The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

⁷The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush was also the ancestor of Nimrod, who was the first heroic warrior on earth.

⁹Since he was the greatest hunter in the world,* his name became proverbial. People would say, “This man is like Nimrod, the greatest hunter in the world.” ¹⁰He built his kingdom in the land of Babylonia,* with the cities of Babylon, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh.

¹¹From there he expanded his territory to Assyria,* building the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, ¹²and Resen (the great city located between Nineveh and Calah).

¹³Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, ¹⁴Pathrusites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.*

¹⁵Canaan’s oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites,* ¹⁶Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, ¹⁷Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ¹⁸Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. The Canaanite clans eventually spread out, ¹⁹and the territory of Canaan extended from Sidon in the north to Gerar and Gaza in the south, and east as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.

²⁰These were the descendants of Ham, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Descendants of Shem

²¹Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth.* Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.

²²The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

²³The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴Arphaxad was the father of Shelah,* and Shelah was the father of Eber.

²⁵Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg (which means “division”), for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups. His brother’s name was Joktan.

²⁶Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were descendants of Joktan. ³⁰The territory they occupied extended from Mesha all the way to Sephar in the eastern mountains.

³¹These were the descendants of Shem, identified by clan, language, territory, and national identity.

Conclusion

³²These are the clans that descended from Noah’s sons, arranged by nation according to their lines of descent. All the nations of the earth descended from these clans after the great flood.

The Tower of Babel

11 At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. ²As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia* and settled there.

³They began saying to each other, “Let’s make bricks and harden them with fire.” (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) ⁴Then they said, “Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.”

⁵But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶“Look!” he said. “The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! ⁷Come, let’s go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won’t be able to understand each other.”

⁸In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why the city was called Babel,* because

10:4 As in some Hebrew manuscripts and Greek version (see also 1 Chr 1:7); most Hebrew manuscripts read *Dodanim*.
10:9 Hebrew *a great hunter before the LORD*; also in 10:9b.
10:10 Hebrew *Shinar*. 10:11 Or *From that land Assyria went out*. 10:14 Hebrew *Casluhites, from whom the Philistines came, and Caphtorites*. Compare Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7. 10:15 Hebrew *ancestor of Heth*. 10:21 Or *Shem, whose older brother was Japheth*. 10:24 Greek version reads *Arphaxad was the father of Cainan, Cainan was the father of Shelah*. Compare Luke 3:36. 11:2 Hebrew *Shinar*. 11:9 Or *Babylon*. *Babel* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “confusion.”

that is where the LORD confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.

The Line of Descent from Shem to Abram

¹⁰This is the account of Shem's family.

Two years after the great flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of* Arphaxad. ¹¹After the birth of* Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹²When Arphaxad was 35 years old, he became the father of Shelah. ¹³After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.*

¹⁴When Shelah was 30 years old, he became the father of Eber. ¹⁵After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber was 34 years old, he became the father of Peleg. ¹⁷After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg was 30 years old, he became the father of Reu. ¹⁹After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu was 32 years old, he became the father of Serug. ²¹After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²²When Serug was 30 years old, he became the father of Nahor. ²³After the birth of Nahor, Serug lived another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor was 29 years old, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶After Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

The Family of Terah

²⁷This is the account of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot. ²⁸But Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the land of his birth, while his father, Terah, was still living. ²⁹Meanwhile, Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. (Milcah and her sister Iscah were daughters of Nahor's brother Haran.)

11:10 Or the ancestor of; also in 11:12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. 11:11 Or the birth of this ancestor of; also in 11:13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25. 11:12-13 Greek version reads ¹²When Arphaxad was 135 years old, he became the father of Cainan. ¹³After the birth of Cainan, Arphaxad lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan was 130 years old, he became the father of Shelah. After the birth of Shelah, Cainan lived another 330 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. Compare Luke 3:35-36. 11:32 Some ancient versions read 145 years; compare 11:26 and 12:4. 12:7 Hebrew seed.

³⁰But Sarai was unable to become pregnant and had no children.

³¹One day Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. ³²Terah lived for 205 years* and died while still in Haran.

The Call of Abram

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you."

⁴So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. ⁵He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, ⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants.*" And Abram built an altar there and dedicated it to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸After that, Abram traveled south and set up camp in the hill country, with Bethel to the west and Ai to the east. There he built another altar and dedicated it to the LORD, and he worshiped the LORD. ⁹Then Abram continued traveling south by stages toward the Negev.

Abram and Sarai in Egypt

¹⁰At that time a severe famine struck the land of Canaan, forcing Abram to go down to Egypt, where he lived as a foreigner. ¹¹As he was approaching the border of Egypt, Abram said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, you are a very beautiful woman. ¹²When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife. Let's kill him; then we can have her!' ¹³So please tell them you are my sister. Then they will spare my life and treat me well because of their interest in you."

¹⁴And sure enough, when Abram arrived in Egypt, everyone noticed Sarai's beauty. ¹⁵When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to Pharaoh, their king, and Sarai was taken into his palace. ¹⁶Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, goats, cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷But the LORD sent terrible plagues upon Pharaoh and his household because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸So Pharaoh summoned Abram and accused him sharply. "What have you done to me?" he demanded. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife?" ¹⁹Why did you say, "She is my sister," and allow me to take her as my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and get out of here!" ²⁰Pharaoh ordered some of his men to escort them, and he sent Abram out of the country, along with his wife and all his possessions.

Abram and Lot Separate

13 So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned. ²(Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.) ³From the Negev, they continued traveling by stages toward Bethel, and they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before. ⁴This was the same place where Abram had built the altar, and there he worshiped the LORD again.

⁵Lot, who was traveling with Abram, had also become very wealthy with flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and many tents. ⁶But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. ⁷So disputes broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. (At that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.)

⁸Finally Abram said to Lot, "Let's not allow this conflict to come between us or our herdsmen. After all, we are close relatives!" ⁹The whole countryside is open to you. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want the land to the left, then I'll take the land on the right. If you prefer the land on the right, then I'll go to the left."

¹⁰Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar. The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) ¹¹Lot chose for himself the whole Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. ¹²So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. ¹³But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the LORD.

¹⁴After Lot had gone, the LORD said to Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction—north and south, east and west. ¹⁵I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants* as a permanent possession. ¹⁶And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted!

¹⁷Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you."

¹⁸So Abram moved his camp to Hebron and settled near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. There he built another altar to the LORD.

Abram Rescues Lot

14 About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia,* King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim ²fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (also called Zoar).

³This second group of kings joined forces in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea*). ⁴For twelve years they had been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

⁵One year later Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived and defeated the Rephaites at Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites at Ham, the Emites at Shaveh-kiriathaim, ⁶and the Horites at Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness. ⁷Then they turned back and came to Enmishpat (now called Kadesh) and conquered all the territory of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

⁸Then the rebel kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (also called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea.* ⁹They fought against King Kedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Babylonia, and King Arioch of Ellasar—four kings against five. ¹⁰As it happened, the valley of the Dead Sea was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains. ¹¹The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and headed for home, taking with them all the spoils of war and the food supplies. ¹²They also captured Lot—Abram's nephew who lived in Sodom—and carried off everything he owned.

¹³But one of Lot's men escaped and reported everything to Abram the Hebrew, who was living near the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram's allies.

¹⁴When Abram heard that his nephew Lot had been captured, he mobilized the 318 trained men who had been born into his household. Then he pursued Kedorlaomer's army until he caught up with them at Dan. ¹⁵There he divided his men and attacked during the night. Kedorlaomer's army fled, but Abram chased them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶Abram recovered all the goods that had been taken, and he

13:15 Hebrew *seed*; also in 13:16. **14:1** Hebrew *Shinar*; also in 14:9. **14:3** Hebrew *Salt Sea*. **14:8** Hebrew *Siddim Valley* (see 14:3); also in 14:10.

brought back his nephew Lot with his possessions and all the women and other captives.

Melchizedek Blesses Abram

¹⁷After Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and all his allies, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

¹⁸And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High,* brought Abram some bread and wine. ¹⁹Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
who has defeated your enemies for you.”

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”

²²Abram replied to the king of Sodom, “I solemnly swear to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich.’ ²⁴I will accept only what my young warriors have already eaten, and I request that you give a fair share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre.”

The LORD's Covenant Promise to Abram

15 Some time later, the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”

²But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don't even have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. ³You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir.”

⁴Then the LORD said to him, “No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir.” ⁵Then the LORD took Abram outside and said to him, “Look up into the sky and count the stars if you can. That's how many descendants you will have!”

⁶And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD counted him as righteous because of his faith.

⁷Then the LORD told him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as your possession.”

⁸But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that I will actually possess it?”

14:18 Hebrew *El-Elyon*; also in **14:19**, **20**, **22**. **15:18** Hebrew *the river of Egypt*, referring either to an eastern branch of the Nile River or to the Brook of Egypt in the Sinai (see Num 34:5).

⁹The LORD told him, “Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” ¹⁰So Abram presented all these to him and killed them. Then he cut each animal down the middle and laid the halves side by side; he did not, however, cut the birds in half. ¹¹Some vultures swooped down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away.

¹²As the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a terrifying darkness came down over him. ¹³Then the LORD said to Abram, “You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land, where they will be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. ¹⁵(As for you, you will die in peace and be buried at a ripe old age.) ¹⁶After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, for the sins of the Amorites do not yet warrant their destruction.”

¹⁷After the sun went down and darkness fell, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. ¹⁸So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, “I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt* to the great Euphrates River—¹⁹the land now occupied by the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, ²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.”

The Birth of Ishmael

16 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. ²So Sarai said to Abram, “The LORD has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal. ³So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This

• Faith

GENESIS 15:6

As we read the story of Abram, we see that he made many mistakes. So how could God call him “righteous”? Though human and sinful, Abram believed and trusted in God. It was faith, not perfection, that made him right in God's eyes. This same principle holds for all of us. Our first response must be to believe in God. Rather than measuring our goodness, God is looking at our faith and our willingness to follow him.

happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.)

⁴So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, “This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she’s pregnant she treats me with contempt. The LORD will show who’s wrong—you or me!”

⁶Abram replied, “Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit.” Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

⁷The angel of the LORD found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. ⁸The angel said to her, “Hagar, Sarai’s servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress, Sarai,” she replied.

⁹The angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.” ¹⁰Then he added, “I will give you more descendants than you can count.”

¹¹And the angel also said, “You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means ‘God hears’), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress. ¹²This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives.”

¹³Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, “You are the God who sees me.”* She also said, “Have I truly seen the One who sees me?” ¹⁴So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means “well of the Living One who sees me”). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

Abram Is Named Abraham

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am El-Shaddai—‘God Almighty.’ Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. ²I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.”

³At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴“This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! ⁵What’s more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham,* for you will be the father of many nations. ⁶I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them!

⁷“I will confirm my covenant with you and

your descendants* after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”

The Mark of the Covenant

⁹Then God said to Abraham, “Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. ¹⁰This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. ¹¹You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. ¹³All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant.”

Sarai Is Named Sarah

¹⁵Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah.* ¹⁶And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.”

¹⁷Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” ¹⁸So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!”

¹⁹But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac,* and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. ²⁰As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.” ²²When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham.

16:13 Hebrew *El-roi*. **17:5** *Abram* means “exalted father”; *Abraham* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “father of many.” **17:7** Hebrew *seed*; also in 17:7b, 8, 9, 10, 19. **17:15** *Sarai* and *Sarah* both mean “princess”; the change in spelling may reflect the difference in dialect between Ur and Canaan. **17:19** *Isaac* means “he laughs.”

²³On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. ²⁴Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, ²⁵and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. ²⁶Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, ²⁷along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

A Son Is Promised to Sarah

18 The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. ²He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground.

³“My lord,” he said, “if it pleases you, stop here for a while. ⁴Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. ⁵And since you’ve honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey.”

“All right,” they said. “Do as you have said.”

⁶So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get three large measures* of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread.” ⁷Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. ⁸When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees.

⁹“Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked.

“She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied.

¹⁰Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!”

Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. ¹¹Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. ¹²So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?”

¹³Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ ¹⁴Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh.”

But the LORD said, “No, you did laugh.”

18:6 Hebrew 3 *seahs*, about half a bushel or 22 liters.

Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

¹⁶Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.

¹⁷“Should I hide my plan from Abraham?” the LORD asked. ¹⁸“For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised.”

²⁰So the LORD told Abraham, “I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because their sin is so flagrant. ²¹I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know.”

²²The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham.

²³Abraham approached him and said, “Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked?

²⁴Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city—will you still sweep it away and not spare it for their sakes? ²⁵Surely you wouldn’t do such a thing, destroying the righteous along with the wicked. Why, you would be treating the righteous and the wicked exactly the same! Surely you wouldn’t do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?”

²⁶And the LORD replied, “If I find fifty righteous people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake.”

²⁷Then Abraham spoke again. “Since I have begun, let me speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. ²⁸Suppose there are only forty-five righteous people rather than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?”

And the LORD said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five righteous people there.”

²⁹Then Abraham pressed his request further. “Suppose there are only forty?”

And the LORD replied, “I will not destroy it for the sake of the forty.”

³⁰“Please don’t be angry, my Lord,” Abraham pleaded. “Let me speak—suppose only thirty righteous people are found?”

And the LORD replied, “I will not destroy it if I find thirty.”

³¹Then Abraham said, “Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?”

And the LORD replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.”

³²Finally, Abraham said, “Lord, please don’t be angry with me if I speak one more time. Suppose only ten are found there?”

And the LORD replied, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the ten.”

³³When the LORD had finished his conversation with Abraham, he went on his way, and Abraham returned to his tent.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

19 That evening the two angels came to the entrance of the city of Sodom. Lot was sitting there, and when he saw them, he stood up to meet them. Then he welcomed them and bowed with his face to the ground. ²“My lords,” he said, “come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up early in the morning and be on your way again.”

“Oh no,” they replied. “We’ll just spend the night out here in the city square.”

³But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. Lot prepared a feast for them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast, and they ate. ⁴But before they retired for the night, all the men of Sodom, young and old, came from all over the city and surrounded the house. ⁵They shouted to Lot, “Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!”

⁶So Lot stepped outside to talk to them, shutting the door behind him. ⁷“Please, my brothers,” he begged, “don’t do such a wicked thing. ⁸Look, I have two virgin daughters. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do with them as you wish. But please, leave these men alone, for they are my guests and are under my protection.”

⁹“Stand back!” they shouted. “This fellow

came to town as an outsider, and now he’s acting like our judge! We’ll treat you far worse than those other men!” And they lunged toward Lot to break down the door.

¹⁰But the two angels^{*} reached out, pulled Lot into the house, and bolted the door. ¹¹Then they blinded all the men, young and old, who were at the door of the house, so they gave up trying to get inside.

¹²Meanwhile, the angels questioned Lot. “Do you have any other relatives here in the city?” they asked. “Get them out of this place—your sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or anyone else. ¹³For we are about to destroy this city completely. The outcry against this place is so great it has reached the LORD, and he has sent us to destroy it.”

¹⁴So Lot rushed out to tell his daughters’ fiancés, “Quick, get out of the city! The LORD is about to destroy it.” But the young men thought he was only joking.

¹⁵At dawn the next morning the angels became insistent. “Hurry,” they said to Lot. “Take your wife and your two daughters who are here. Get out right now, or you will be swept away in the destruction of the city!”

¹⁶When Lot still hesitated, the angels seized his hand and the hands of his wife and two daughters and rushed them to safety outside the city, for the LORD was merciful. ¹⁷When they were safely out of the city, one of the angels ordered, “Run for your lives! And don’t look back or stop anywhere in the valley! Escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away!”

¹⁸“Oh no, my lord!” Lot begged. ¹⁹“You have been so gracious to me and saved my life, and you have shown such great kindness. But I cannot go to the mountains. Disaster would catch up to me there, and I would soon die. ²⁰See, there is a small village nearby. Please let me go there instead; don’t you see how small it is? Then my life will be saved.”

²¹“All right,” the angel said, “I will grant your request. I will not destroy the little village. ²²But hurry! Escape to it, for I can do nothing until you arrive there.” (This explains why that village was known as Zoar, which means “little place.”)

²³Lot reached the village just as the sun was rising over the horizon. ²⁴Then the LORD rained down fire and burning sulfur from the sky on Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁵He utterly destroyed them, along with the other cities and villages of the plain, wiping out all the people and every bit of vegetation. ²⁶But Lot’s wife looked back as she was following behind him, and she turned into a pillar of salt.

²⁷Abraham got up early that morning and hurried out to the place where he had stood

19:10 Hebrew *men*; also in 19:12, 16.

• Comfort

GENESIS 19:16

An affluent culture holds many attractions that can lull us into a lifestyle that is far too content and comfortable. We often think of comfort in the context of helping and encouraging others, but here it can also mean freedom from pain and trouble, a life of convenience. This is not always a good thing, because it deadens our sensitivity to the needs of others and causes us to forget that all we have comes from God. Lot had become so comfortable living among ungodly neighbors in the wealthy city of Sodom that he had stopped being a credible witness for God. When the angels told him the city would be destroyed, Lot still hesitated, not wanting to give up his worldly pleasures. Don’t let yourself become so comfortable that you lose your passion to follow God.

in the LORD's presence. ²⁸He looked out across the plain toward Sodom and Gomorrah and watched as columns of smoke rose from the cities like smoke from a furnace.

²⁹But God had listened to Abraham's request and kept Lot safe, removing him from the disaster that engulfed the cities on the plain.

Lot and His Daughters

³⁰Afterward Lot left Zoar because he was afraid of the people there, and he went to live in a cave in the mountains with his two daughters. ³¹One day the older daughter said to her sister, "There are no men left anywhere in this entire area, so we can't get married like everyone else. And our father will soon be too old to have children. ³²Come, let's get him drunk with wine, and then we will have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father."

³³So that night they got him drunk with wine, and the older daughter went in and had intercourse with her father. He was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁴The next morning the older daughter said to her younger sister, "I had sex with our father last night. Let's get him drunk with wine again tonight, and you go in and have sex with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father." ³⁵So that night they got him drunk with wine again, and the younger daughter went in and had intercourse with him. As before, he was unaware of her lying down or getting up again.

³⁶As a result, both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their own father. ³⁷When the older daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Moab.* He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Moabites. ³⁸When the younger daughter gave birth to a son, she named him Ben-ammi.* He became the ancestor of the nation now known as the Ammonites.

Abraham Deceives Abimelech

20 Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner, ²Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.

³But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!"

⁴But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? ⁵Didn't Abraham tell me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'Yes, he is

my brother.' I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean."

⁶In the dream God responded, "Yes, I know you are innocent. That's why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don't return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die."

⁸Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. ⁹Then Abimelech called for Abraham. "What have you done to us?" he demanded. "What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! ¹⁰Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?"

¹¹Abraham replied, "I thought, 'This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.' ¹²And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. ¹³When God called me to leave my father's home and to travel from place to place, I told her, 'Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.'"

¹⁴Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. ¹⁵Then Abimelech said, "Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live." ¹⁶And he said to Sarah, "Look, I am giving your 'brother' 1,000 pieces of silver* in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared."

¹⁷Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. ¹⁸For the LORD had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham's wife, Sarah.

The Birth of Isaac

21 The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. ²She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. ³And Abraham named their son Isaac. ⁴Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. ⁵Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born.

⁶And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter.* All who hear about this will laugh with me. ⁷Who would have said to Abraham

19:37 *Moab* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "from father." 19:38 *Ben-ammi* means "son of my kinsman." 20:16 Hebrew 1,000 [*shekels*] of silver, about 25 pounds or 11.4 kilograms in weight. 21:6 The name *Isaac* means "he laughs."

that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!”

Hagar and Ishmael Are Sent Away

⁸When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. ⁹But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of her son, Isaac.* ¹⁰So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it!”

¹¹This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son. ¹²But God told Abraham, “Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. ¹³But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar’s son because he is your son, too.”

¹⁴So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar’s shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and she wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba.

¹⁵When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards* away. “I don’t want to watch the boy die,” she said, as she burst into tears.

¹⁷But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, “Hagar, what’s wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants.”

¹⁹Then God opened Hagar’s eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, ²¹and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt.

Abraham’s Covenant with Abimelech

²²About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. “God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do,” Abimelech said. ²³“Swear to me in God’s name that you will never deceive me, my children, or any of my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country where you are living as a foreigner.”

²⁴Abraham replied, “Yes, I swear to it!”

²⁵Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech’s servants had taken by force from Abraham’s servants.

²⁶“This is the first I’ve heard of it,” Abimelech

answered. “I have no idea who is responsible. You have never complained about this before.”

²⁷Abraham then gave some of his sheep, goats, and cattle to Abimelech, and they made a treaty. ²⁸But Abraham also took seven additional female lambs and set them off by themselves. ²⁹Abimelech asked, “Why have you set these seven apart from the others?”

³⁰Abraham replied, “Please accept these seven lambs to show your agreement that I dug this well.” ³¹Then he named the place Beersheba (which means “well of the oath”), because that was where they had sworn the oath.

³²After making their covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines. ³³Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he worshiped the LORD, the Eternal God.* ³⁴And Abraham lived as a foreigner in Philistine country for a long time.

Abraham’s Faith Tested

22 Some time later, God tested Abraham’s faith. “Abraham!” God called.

“Yes,” he replied. “Here I am.”

²“Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.”

³The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵“Stay here with the donkey,” Abraham told the servants. “The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back.”

⁶So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac’s shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, ⁷Isaac turned to Abraham and said, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

“We have the fire and the wood,” the boy said, “but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?”

⁸“God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son,” Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

⁹When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the

21:9 As in Greek version and Latin Vulgate; Hebrew lacks of her son, Isaac. 21:16 Hebrew a bowshot. 21:33 Hebrew El-Olam.

wood. ¹⁰And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. ¹¹At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Yes,” Abraham replied. “Here I am!”

¹²“Don’t lay a hand on the boy!” the angel said. “Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.”

¹³Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means “the LORD will provide”). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”

¹⁵Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. ¹⁶“This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that ¹⁷I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants* beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. ¹⁸And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.”

¹⁹Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live.

²⁰Soon after this, Abraham heard that Milcah, his brother Nahor’s wife, had borne Nahor eight sons. ²¹The oldest was named Uz, the next oldest was Buz, followed by Kemuel (the ancestor of the Arameans), ²²Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel. ²³(Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.) In addition to these eight sons from Milcah, ²⁴Nahor had four other children from his concubine Reumah. Their names were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

The Burial of Sarah

23 When Sarah was 127 years old, ²she died at Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron) in the land of Canaan. There Abraham mourned and wept for her.

³Then, leaving her body, he said to the Hittite elders, ⁴“Here I am, a stranger and a foreigner among you. Please sell me a piece of land so I can give my wife a proper burial.”

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶“Listen, my lord, you are an honored prince among us. Choose the finest of our tombs and bury her there. No one here will refuse to help you in this way.”

⁷Then Abraham bowed low before the Hittites ⁸and said, “Since you are willing to help

me in this way, be so kind as to ask Ephron son of Zohar ⁹to let me buy his cave at Machpelah, down at the end of his field. I will pay the full price in the presence of witnesses, so I will have a permanent burial place for my family.”

¹⁰Ephron was sitting there among the others, and he answered Abraham as the others listened, speaking publicly before all the Hittite elders of the town. ¹¹“No, my lord,” he said to Abraham, “please listen to me. I will give you the field and the cave. Here in the presence of my people, I give it to you. Go and bury your dead.”

¹²Abraham again bowed low before the citizens of the land, ¹³and he replied to Ephron as everyone listened. “No, listen to me. I will buy it from you. Let me pay the full price for the field so I can bury my dead there.”

¹⁴Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵“My lord, please listen to me. The land is worth 400 pieces* of silver, but what is that between friends? Go ahead and bury your dead.”

¹⁶So Abraham agreed to Ephron’s price and paid the amount he had suggested—400 pieces of silver, weighed according to the market standard. The Hittite elders witnessed the transaction.

¹⁷So Abraham bought the plot of land belonging to Ephron at Machpelah, near Mamre. This included the field itself, the cave that was in it, and all the surrounding trees. ¹⁸It was transferred to Abraham as his permanent possession in the presence of the Hittite elders at the city gate. ¹⁹Then Abraham buried his wife, Sarah, there in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre (also called Hebron). ²⁰So the field and the cave were transferred from the Hittites to Abraham for use as a permanent burial place.

A Wife for Isaac

24 Abraham was now a very old man, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. ²One day Abraham said to his oldest servant, the man in charge of his household, “Take an oath by putting your hand under my thigh. ³Swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and earth, that you will not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. ⁴Go instead to my homeland, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son Isaac.”

⁵The servant asked, “But what if I can’t find a young woman who is willing to travel so far from home? Should I then take Isaac there to live among your relatives in the land you came from?”

⁶“No!” Abraham responded. “Be careful never to take my son there. ⁷For the LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and my native land, solemnly promised to give this land to my descendants.* He will send his angel ahead of you, and he will see to

22:17 Hebrew *seed*; also in 22:17b, 18. 23:15 Hebrew *400 shekels*, about 10 pounds or 4.6 kilograms in weight; also in 23:16. 24:7 Hebrew *seed*; also in 24:60.

it that you find a wife there for my son. ⁸If she is unwilling to come back with you, then you are free from this oath of mine. But under no circumstances are you to take my son there.”

⁹So the servant took an oath by putting his hand under the thigh of his master, Abraham. He swore to follow Abraham’s instructions. ¹⁰Then he loaded ten of Abraham’s camels with all kinds of expensive gifts from his master, and he traveled to distant Aram-naharaim. There he went to the town where Abraham’s brother Nahor had settled. ¹¹He made the camels kneel beside a well just outside the town. It was evening, and the women were coming out to draw water.

¹²“O LORD, God of my master, Abraham,” he prayed. “Please give me success today, and show unflinching love to my master, Abraham. ¹³See, I am standing here beside this spring, and the young women of the town are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴This is my request. I will ask one of them, ‘Please give me a drink from your jug.’ If she says, ‘Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!’—let her be the one you have selected as Isaac’s wife. This is how I will know that you have shown unflinching love to my master.”

¹⁵Before he had finished praying, he saw a young woman named Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Abraham’s brother Nahor and his wife, Milcah. ¹⁶Rebekah was very beautiful and old enough to be married, but she was still a virgin. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up again. ¹⁷Running over to her, the servant said, “Please give me a little drink of water from your jug.”

¹⁸“Yes, my lord,” she answered, “have a drink.” And she quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and gave him a drink. ¹⁹When she had given him a drink, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels, too, until they have had enough to drink.” ²⁰So she quickly emptied her jug into the watering trough and ran back to the well to draw water for all his camels.

²¹The servant watched her in silence, wondering whether or not the LORD had given him success in his mission. ²²Then at last, when the camels had finished drinking, he took out a gold ring for her nose and two large gold bracelets* for her wrists.

²³“Whose daughter are you?” he asked. “And please tell me, would your father have any room to put us up for the night?”

²⁴“I am the daughter of Bethuel,” she replied. “My grandparents are Nahor and Milcah. ²⁵Yes, we have plenty of straw and feed for the camels, and we have room for guests.”

²⁶The man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. ²⁷“Praise the LORD, the God of my master,

Abraham,” he said. “The LORD has shown unflinching love and faithfulness to my master, for he has led me straight to my master’s relatives.”

²⁸The young woman ran home to tell her family everything that had happened. ²⁹Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, who ran out to meet the man at the spring. ³⁰He had seen the nose-ring and the bracelets on his sister’s wrists, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man had said. So he rushed out to the spring, where the man was still standing beside his camels. ³¹Laban said to him, “Come and stay with us, you who are blessed by the LORD! Why are you standing here outside the town when I have a room all ready for you and a place prepared for the camels?”

³²So the man went home with Laban, and Laban unloaded the camels, gave him straw for their bedding, fed them, and provided water for the man and the camel drivers to wash their feet. ³³Then food was served. But Abraham’s servant said, “I don’t want to eat until I have told you why I have come.”

“All right,” Laban said, “tell us.”

³⁴“I am Abraham’s servant,” he explained.

³⁵“And the LORD has greatly blessed my master; he has become a wealthy man. The LORD has given him flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, a fortune in silver and gold, and many male and female servants and camels and donkeys.

³⁶“When Sarah, my master’s wife, was very old, she gave birth to my master’s son, and my master has given him everything he owns. ³⁷And my master made me take an oath. He said, ‘Do not allow my son to marry one of these local Canaanite women. ³⁸Go instead to my father’s house, to my relatives, and find a wife there for my son.’

³⁹“But I said to my master, ‘What if I can’t find a young woman who is willing to go back with me?’ ⁴⁰He responded, ‘The LORD, in whose presence I have lived, will send his angel with you and will make your mission successful. Yes, you must find a wife for my son from among my relatives, from my father’s family. ⁴¹Then you will have fulfilled your obligation. But if you go to my relatives and they refuse to let her go with you, you will be free from my oath.’

⁴²“So today when I came to the spring, I prayed this prayer: ‘O LORD, God of my master, Abraham, please give me success on this mission. ⁴³See, I am standing here beside this spring. This is my request. When a young woman comes to draw water, I will say to her, ‘Please give me a little drink of water from your

24:22 Hebrew a gold nose-ring weighing a beka [0.2 ounces or 6 grams] and two gold bracelets weighing 10 [shekels] [4 ounces or 114 grams].

jug.”⁴⁴If she says, “Yes, have a drink, and I will draw water for your camels, too,” let her be the one you have selected to be the wife of my master’s son.”

⁴⁵“Before I had finished praying in my heart, I saw Rebekah coming out with her water jug on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’⁴⁶She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, ‘Yes, have a drink, and I will water your camels, too!’ So I drank, and then she watered the camels.

⁴⁷“Then I asked, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She replied, ‘I am the daughter of Bethuel, and my grandparents are Nahor and Milcah.’ So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

⁴⁸“Then I bowed low and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master, Abraham, because he had led me straight to my master’s niece to be his son’s wife.⁴⁹So tell me—will you or won’t you show unfailing love and faithfulness to my master? Please tell me yes or no, and then I’ll know what to do next.”

⁵⁰Then Laban and Bethuel replied, “The LORD has obviously brought you here, so there is nothing we can say.⁵¹Here is Rebekah; take her and go. Yes, let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has directed.”

⁵²When Abraham’s servant heard their answer, he bowed down to the ground and worshiped the LORD.⁵³Then he brought out silver and gold jewelry and clothing and presented them to Rebekah. He also gave expensive presents to her brother and mother.⁵⁴Then they ate their meal, and the servant and the men with him stayed there overnight.

But early the next morning, Abraham’s servant said, “Send me back to my master.”

⁵⁵“But we want Rebekah to stay with us at least ten days,” her brother and mother said. “Then she can go.”

⁵⁶But he said, “Don’t delay me. The LORD has made my mission successful; now send me back so I can return to my master.”

⁵⁷“Well,” they said, “we’ll call Rebekah and ask her what she thinks.”⁵⁸So they called Rebekah. “Are you willing to go with this man?” they asked her.

And she replied, “Yes, I will go.”

⁵⁹So they said good-bye to Rebekah and sent her away with Abraham’s servant and his men. The woman who had been Rebekah’s childhood nurse went along with her.⁶⁰They gave her this blessing as she parted:

“Our sister, may you become
the mother of many millions!
May your descendants be strong
and conquer the cities of their
enemies.”

⁶¹Then Rebekah and her servant girls mounted the camels and followed the man. So Abraham’s servant took Rebekah and went on his way.

⁶²Meanwhile, Isaac, whose home was in the Negev, had returned from Beer-lahai-roi.⁶³One evening as he was walking and meditating in the fields, he looked up and saw the camels coming.⁶⁴When Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she quickly dismounted from her camel.⁶⁵“Who is that man walking through the fields to meet us?” she asked the servant.

And he replied, “It is my master.” So Rebekah covered her face with her veil.⁶⁶Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done.

⁶⁷And Isaac brought Rebekah into his mother Sarah’s tent, and she became his wife. He loved her deeply, and she was a special comfort to him after the death of his mother.

The Death of Abraham

25 Abraham married another wife, whose name was Keturah.²She gave birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.³Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan. Dedan’s descendants were the Asshurites, Letushites, and Leummites.⁴Midian’s sons were Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. These were all descendants of Abraham through Keturah.

⁵Abraham gave everything he owned to his son Isaac.⁶But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to a land in the east, away from Isaac.

⁷Abraham lived for 175 years,⁸and he died at a ripe old age, having lived a long and satisfying life. He breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death.⁹His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite.¹⁰This was the field Abraham had purchased from the Hittites and where he had buried his wife Sarah.¹¹After Abraham’s death, God blessed his son Isaac, who settled near Beer-lahai-roi in the Negev.

Ishmael’s Descendants

¹²This is the account of the family of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah’s Egyptian servant.¹³Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael’s descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, Massa,¹⁵Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.¹⁶These twelve sons of Ishmael became the founders of twelve tribes named after them, listed according to the places they settled and camped.¹⁷Ishmael lived for 137 years. Then he breathed his last and joined his ancestors in death.¹⁸Ishmael’s descendants occupied the region from Havilah to Shur, which is east of Egypt in the direction of Asshur. There

they lived in open hostility toward all their relatives.*

The Births of Esau and Jacob

¹⁹This is the account of the family of Isaac, the son of Abraham. ²⁰When Isaac was forty years old, he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹Isaac pleaded with the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was unable to have children. The LORD answered Isaac's prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. ²²But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. So she went to ask the LORD about it. "Why is this happening to me?" she asked.

²³And the LORD told her, "The sons in your womb will become two nations. From the very beginning, the two nations will be rivals. One nation will be stronger than the other; and your older son will serve your younger son."

²⁴And when the time came to give birth, Rebekah discovered that she did indeed have twins! ²⁵The first one was very red at birth and covered with thick hair like a fur coat. So they named him Esau.* ²⁶Then the other twin was born with his hand grasping Esau's heel. So they named him Jacob.* Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

Esau Sells His Birthright

²⁷As the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter. He was an outdoorsman, but Jacob had a quiet temperament, preferring to stay at home. ²⁸Isaac loved Esau because he enjoyed eating the wild game Esau brought home, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹One day when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau arrived home from the wilderness exhausted and hungry. ³⁰Esau said to Jacob, "I'm

starved! Give me some of that red stew!" (This is how Esau got his other name, Edom, which means "red.")

³¹"All right," Jacob replied, "but trade me your rights as the firstborn son."

³²"Look, I'm dying of starvation!" said Esau. "What good is my birthright to me now?"

³³But Jacob said, "First you must swear that your birthright is mine." So Esau swore an oath, thereby selling all his rights as the firstborn to his brother, Jacob.

³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate the meal, then got up and left. He showed contempt for his rights as the firstborn.

Isaac Deceives Abimelech

26 A severe famine now struck the land, as had happened before in Abraham's time. So Isaac moved to Gerar, where Abimelech, king of the Philistines, lived.

²The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt, but do as I tell you. ³Live here as a foreigner in this land, and I will be with you and bless you. I hereby confirm that I will give all these lands to you and your descendants,* just as I solemnly promised Abraham, your father. ⁴I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars of the sky, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed. ⁵I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, decrees, and instructions."

⁶So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

⁷When the men who lived there asked Isaac about his wife, Rebekah, he said, "She is my sister." He was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "They will kill me to get her, because she is so beautiful." ⁸But some time later, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out his window and saw Isaac caressing Rebekah.

⁹Immediately, Abimelech called for Isaac and exclaimed, "She is obviously your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?"

"Because I was afraid someone would kill me to get her from me," Isaac replied.

¹⁰"How could you do this to us?" Abimelech exclaimed. "One of my people might easily have taken your wife and slept with her, and you would have made us guilty of great sin."

¹¹Then Abimelech issued a public proclamation: "Anyone who touches this man or his wife will be put to death!"

Conflict over Water Rights

¹²When Isaac planted his crops that year, he harvested a hundred times more grain than he planted, for the LORD blessed him. ¹³He became

25:18 The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. 25:25 *Esau* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "hair." 25:26 *Jacob* sounds like the Hebrew words for "heel" and "deceiver." 26:3 Hebrew *seed*; also in 26:4, 24.

• Fear

GENESIS 26:7

Isaac was afraid that the men in Gerar would kill him to get his beautiful wife, Rebekah. So he told them that Rebekah was his sister. Where did he learn that trick? Evidently, Isaac was aware of the actions of his father, Abraham (Genesis 12:10-13; 20:1-2). Parents help shape the future of the world by the way they shape the lifestyle and values of their children. Don't let fear keep you from doing what is right. When you demonstrate courage to do the right thing, then your children are more likely to be courageous too.

a very rich man, and his wealth continued to grow. ¹⁴He acquired so many flocks of sheep and goats, herds of cattle, and servants that the Philistines became jealous of him. ¹⁵So the Philistines filled up all of Isaac's wells with dirt. These were the wells that had been dug by the servants of his father, Abraham.

¹⁶Finally, Abimelech ordered Isaac to leave the country. "Go somewhere else," he said, "for you have become too powerful for us."

¹⁷So Isaac moved away to the Gerar Valley, where he set up their tents and settled down. ¹⁸He reopened the wells his father had dug, which the Philistines had filled in after Abraham's death. Isaac also restored the names Abraham had given them.

¹⁹Isaac's servants also dug in the Gerar Valley and discovered a well of fresh water. ²⁰But then the shepherds from Gerar came and claimed the spring. "This is our water," they said, and they argued over it with Isaac's herdsmen. So Isaac named the well Esek (which means "argument"). ²¹Isaac's men then dug another well, but again there was a dispute over it. So Isaac named it Sitnah (which means "hostility"). ²²Abandoning that one, Isaac moved on and dug another well. This time there was no dispute over it, so Isaac named the place Rehoboth (which means "open space"), for he said, "At last the LORD has created enough space for us to prosper in this land."

²³From there Isaac moved to Beersheba, ²⁴where the LORD appeared to him on the night of his arrival. "I am the God of your father, Abraham," he said. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you. I will multiply your descendants, and they will become a great nation. I will do this because of my promise to Abraham, my servant." ²⁵Then Isaac built an altar there and worshiped the LORD. He set up his camp at that place, and his servants dug another well.

Isaac's Covenant with Abimelech

²⁶One day King Abimelech came from Gerar with his adviser, Ahuzzath, and also Phicol, his army commander. ²⁷"Why have you come here?" Isaac asked. "You obviously hate me, since you kicked me off your land."

²⁸They replied, "We can plainly see that the LORD is with you. So we want to enter into a sworn treaty with you. Let's make a covenant. ²⁹Swear that you will not harm us, just as we have never troubled you. We have always treated you well, and we sent you away from us in peace. And now look how the LORD has blessed you!"

³⁰So Isaac prepared a covenant feast to celebrate the treaty, and they ate and drank together. ³¹Early the next morning, they each took a solemn oath not to interfere with each other. Then Isaac sent them home again, and they left him in peace.

³²That very day Isaac's servants came and told him about a new well they had dug. "We've found water!" they exclaimed. ³³So Isaac named the well Shibah (which means "oath"). And to this day the town that grew up there is called Beersheba (which means "well of the oath").

³⁴At the age of forty, Esau married two Hittite wives: Judith, the daughter of Beeri, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon. ³⁵But Esau's wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.

Jacob Steals Esau's Blessing

27 One day when Isaac was old and turning blind, he called for Esau, his older son, and said, "My son."

"Yes, Father?" Esau replied.

²"I am an old man now," Isaac said, "and I don't know when I may die. ³Take your bow and a quiver full of arrows, and go out into the open country to hunt some wild game for me. ⁴Prepare my favorite dish, and bring it here for me to eat. Then I will pronounce the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son, before I die."

⁵But Rebekah overheard what Isaac had said to his son Esau. So when Esau left to hunt for the wild game, ⁶she said to her son Jacob, "Listen. I overheard your father say to Esau, ⁷'Bring me some wild game and prepare me a delicious meal. Then I will bless you in the LORD's presence before I die.' ⁸Now, my son, listen to me. Do exactly as I tell you. ⁹Go out to the flocks, and bring me two fine young goats. I'll use them to prepare your father's favorite dish. ¹⁰Then take the food to your father so he can eat it and bless you before he dies."

¹¹"But look," Jacob replied to Rebekah, "my brother, Esau, is a hairy man, and my skin is smooth. ¹²What if my father touches me? He'll see that I'm trying to trick him, and then he'll curse me instead of blessing me."

¹³But his mother replied, "Then let the curse fall on me, my son! Just do what I tell you. Go out and get the goats for me!"

¹⁴So Jacob went out and got the young goats for his mother. Rebekah took them and prepared a delicious meal, just the way Isaac liked it. ¹⁵Then she took Esau's favorite clothes, which were there in the house, and gave them to her younger son, Jacob. ¹⁶She covered his arms and the smooth part of his neck with the skin of the young goats. ¹⁷Then she gave Jacob the delicious meal, including freshly baked bread.

¹⁸So Jacob took the food to his father. "My father?" he said.

"Yes, my son," Isaac answered. "Who are you—Esau or Jacob?"

¹⁹Jacob replied, "It's Esau, your firstborn son. I've done as you told me. Here is the wild game. Now sit up and eat it so you can give me your blessing."

²⁰Isaac asked, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?”

“The LORD your God put it in my path!” Jacob replied.

²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come closer so I can touch you and make sure that you really are Esau.” ²²So Jacob went closer to his father, and Isaac touched him. “The voice is Jacob’s, but the hands are Esau’s,” Isaac said. ²³But he did not recognize Jacob, because Jacob’s hands felt hairy just like Esau’s. So Isaac prepared to bless Jacob. ²⁴“But are you really my son Esau?” he asked.

“Yes, I am,” Jacob replied.

²⁵Then Isaac said, “Now, my son, bring me the wild game. Let me eat it, and then I will give you my blessing.” So Jacob took the food to his father, and Isaac ate it. He also drank the wine that Jacob served him. ²⁶Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come a little closer and kiss me, my son.”

²⁷So Jacob went over and kissed him. And when Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he was finally convinced, and he blessed his son. He said, “Ah! The smell of my son is like the smell of the outdoors, which the LORD has blessed!

- ²⁸ “From the dew of heaven
and the richness of the earth,
may God always give you abundant harvests
of grain
and bountiful new wine.
²⁹ May many nations become your servants,
and may they bow down to you.

• Selfishness

GENESIS 27:1-40

Jacob was like most of us: One moment he was capable of breathtaking insight into God’s call on his life; the next moment he could steal you blind. Here, and in the story of his taking Esau’s birthright (Genesis 25:27-34), Jacob was motivated, not by a noble pursuit of God, but by selfishness and ambition. Jacob’s selfishness created painful consequences that dogged him much of his life. He deceived his father, he had to leave home and never see his mother again, and he lived twenty years in the fear of his brother’s revenge. God redeemed Jacob’s mistakes but not before selfishness had caused much brokenness and pain. Ask God to reveal and root out any selfishness in your life before it poisons your relationships.

May you be the master over your brothers,
and may your mother’s sons bow down
to you.

All who curse you will be cursed,
and all who bless you will be blessed.”

³⁰As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and almost before Jacob had left his father, Esau returned from his hunt. ³¹Esau prepared a delicious meal and brought it to his father. Then he said, “Sit up, my father, and eat my wild game so you can give me your blessing.”

³²But Isaac asked him, “Who are you?”

Esau replied, “It’s your son, your firstborn son, Esau.”

³³Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably and said, “Then who just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him just before you came. And yes, that blessing must stand!”

³⁴When Esau heard his father’s words, he let out a loud and bitter cry. “Oh my father, what about me? Bless me, too!” he begged.

³⁵But Isaac said, “Your brother was here, and he tricked me. He has taken away your blessing.”

³⁶Esau exclaimed, “No wonder his name is Jacob, for now he has cheated me twice.* First he took my rights as the firstborn, and now he has stolen my blessing. Oh, haven’t you saved even one blessing for me?”

³⁷Isaac said to Esau, “I have made Jacob your master and have declared that all his brothers will be his servants. I have guaranteed him an abundance of grain and wine—what is left for me to give you, my son?”

³⁸Esau pleaded, “But do you have only one blessing? Oh my father, bless me, too!” Then Esau broke down and wept.

³⁹Finally, his father, Isaac, said to him,

“You will live away from the richness of
the earth,
and away from the dew of the heaven
above.

- ⁴⁰ You will live by your sword,
and you will serve your brother.
But when you decide to break free,
you will shake his yoke from your neck.”

Jacob Flees to Paddan-Aram

⁴¹From that time on, Esau hated Jacob because their father had given Jacob the blessing. And Esau began to scheme: “I will soon be mourning my father’s death. Then I will kill my brother, Jacob.”

⁴²But Rebekah heard about Esau’s plans. So she sent for Jacob and told him, “Listen, Esau is consoling himself by plotting to kill you. ⁴³So

^{27:36} *Jacob* sounds like the Hebrew words for “heel” and “deceiver.”

listen carefully, my son. Get ready and flee to my brother, Laban, in Haran. ⁴⁴Stay there with him until your brother cools off. ⁴⁵When he calms down and forgets what you have done to him, I will send for you to come back. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

⁴⁶Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm sick and tired of these local Hittite women! I would rather die than see Jacob marry one of them."

28 So Isaac called for Jacob, blessed him, and said, "You must not marry any of these Canaanite women. ²Instead, go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of your grandfather Bethuel, and marry one of your uncle Laban's daughters. ³May God Almighty* bless you and give you many children. And may your descendants multiply and become many nations! ⁴May God pass on to you and your descendants* the blessings he promised to Abraham. May you own this land where you are now living as a foreigner, for God gave this land to Abraham."

⁵So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to stay with his uncle Laban, his mother's brother, the son of Bethuel the Aramean.

⁶Esau knew that his father, Isaac, had blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to find a wife, and that he had warned Jacob, "You must not marry a Canaanite woman." ⁷He also knew that Jacob had obeyed his parents and gone to Paddan-aram. ⁸It was now very clear to Esau that his father did not like the local Canaanite women. ⁹So Esau visited his uncle Ishmael's family and married one of Ishmael's daughters, in addition to the wives he already had. His new wife's name was Mahalath. She was the sister of Nebaioth and the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son.

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

¹⁰Meanwhile, Jacob left Beersheba and traveled toward Haran. ¹¹At sundown he arrived at a good place to set up camp and stopped there for the night. Jacob found a stone to rest his head against and lay down to sleep. ¹²As he slept, he dreamed of a stairway that reached from the earth up to heaven. And he saw the angels of God going up and down the stairway.

¹³At the top of the stairway stood the LORD, and he said, "I am the LORD, the God of your grandfather Abraham, and the God of your father, Isaac. The ground you are lying on belongs to you. I am giving it to you and your descendants. ¹⁴Your descendants will be as numerous as the dust of the earth! They will spread out in all directions—to the west and the east, to the north and the south. And all the families of the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants. ¹⁵What's more, I am with you, and

28:3 Hebrew *El-Shaddai*. 28:4 Hebrew *seed*; also in 28:13, 14.

I will protect you wherever you go. One day I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have finished giving you everything I have promised you."

¹⁶Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it!" ¹⁷But he was also afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!"

¹⁸The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. ¹⁹He named that place Bethel (which means "house of God"), although it was previously called Luz.

²⁰Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, ²¹and if I return safely to my father's home, then the LORD will certainly be my God. ²²And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me."

Jacob Arrives at Paddan-Aram

29 Then Jacob hurried on, finally arriving in the land of the east. ²He saw a well in the distance. Three flocks of sheep and goats lay in an open field beside it, waiting to be watered. But a heavy stone covered the mouth of the well.

³It was the custom there to wait for all the flocks to arrive before removing the stone and watering the animals. Afterward the stone would be placed back over the mouth of the well. ⁴Jacob went over to the shepherds and asked, "Where are you from, my friends?"

"We are from Haran," they answered.

⁵"Do you know a man there named Laban, the grandson of Nahor?" he asked.

"Yes, we do," they replied.

⁶"Is he doing well?" Jacob asked.

"Yes, he's well," they answered. "Look, here comes his daughter Rachel with the flock now."

⁷Jacob said, "Look, it's still broad daylight—too early to round up the animals. Why don't you water the sheep and goats so they can get back out to pasture?"

⁸"We can't water the animals until all the flocks have arrived," they replied. "Then the shepherds move the stone from the mouth of the well, and we water all the sheep and goats."

⁹Jacob was still talking with them when Rachel arrived with her father's flock, for she was a shepherd. ¹⁰And because Rachel was his cousin—the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother—and because the sheep and goats belonged to his uncle Laban, Jacob went over to the well and moved the stone from its mouth and watered his uncle's flock. ¹¹Then Jacob

kissed Rachel, and he wept aloud. ¹²He explained to Rachel that he was her cousin on her father's side—the son of her aunt Rebekah. So Rachel quickly ran and told her father, Laban.

¹³As soon as Laban heard that his nephew Jacob had arrived, he ran out to meet him. He embraced and kissed him and brought him home. When Jacob had told him his story, ¹⁴Laban exclaimed, “You really are my own flesh and blood!”

Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

After Jacob had stayed with Laban for about a month, ¹⁵Laban said to him, “You shouldn't work for me without pay just because we are relatives. Tell me how much your wages should be.”

¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. ¹⁷There was no sparkle in Leah's eyes,* but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face. ¹⁸Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, “I'll work for you for seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife.”

¹⁹“Agreed!” Laban replied. “I'd rather give her to you than to anyone else. Stay and work with me.” ²⁰So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

²¹Finally, the time came for him to marry her. “I have fulfilled my agreement,” Jacob said to

Laban. “Now give me my wife so I can sleep with her.”

²²So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast. ²³But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. ²⁴(Laban had given Leah a servant, Zilpah, to be her maid.)

²⁵But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! “What have you done to me?” Jacob raged at Laban. “I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?”

²⁶“It's not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn,” Laban replied. ²⁷“But wait until the bridal week is over; then we'll give you Rachel, too—provided you promise to work another seven years for me.”

²⁸So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too. ²⁹(Laban gave Rachel a servant, Bilhah, to be her maid.) ³⁰So Jacob slept with Rachel, too, and he loved her much more than Leah. He then stayed and worked for Laban the additional seven years.

Jacob's Many Children

³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he enabled her to have children, but Rachel could not conceive. ³²So Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben,* for she said, “The LORD has noticed my misery, and now my husband will love me.”

³³She soon became pregnant again and gave birth to another son. She named him Simeon,* for she said, “The LORD heard that I was unloved and has given me another son.”

³⁴Then she became pregnant a third time and gave birth to another son. He was named Levi,* for she said, “Surely this time my husband will feel affection for me, since I have given him three sons!”

³⁵Once again Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son. She named him Judah,* for she said, “Now I will praise the LORD!” And then she stopped having children.

30 When Rachel saw that she wasn't having any children for Jacob, she became jealous of her sister. She pleaded with Jacob, “Give me children, or I'll die!”

²Then Jacob became furious with Rachel. “Am I God?” he asked. “He's the one who has kept you from having children!”

³Then Rachel told him, “Take my maid, Bilhah, and sleep with her. She will bear children for me,* and through her I can have a family,

^{29:17} Or *Leah had dull eyes*, or *Leah had soft eyes*. The meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. ^{29:32} *Reuben* means “Look, a son!” It also sounds like the Hebrew for “He has seen my misery.” ^{29:33} *Simeon* probably means “one who hears.” ^{29:34} *Levi* sounds like a Hebrew term that means “being attached” or “feeling affection for.” ^{29:35} *Judah* is related to the Hebrew term for “praise.” ^{30:3} Hebrew *bear children on my knees*.

• Pain

GENESIS 30:1-2

Why does God permit his loved ones to suffer pain, such as the pain of being unable to have children? Why can't he just give a child to parents who want one so badly? The real answer is that we don't know. What we do know is that we live in a fallen world where life doesn't always go the way we had hoped. We also know that God's love for us is greater than anything we could ever imagine. But, for reasons we do not fully understand, he does not always allow us to have what we desire. Maybe it's because he has a different plan for us. For now we must trust that God is sovereign and that the pain and injustices of this world will be completely healed and redeemed in heaven for those who have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Until then, we cannot stop trusting that the God of that heaven is also the same God who knows our hurts and provides comfort here on earth.

too.”⁴ So Rachel gave her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her.⁵ Bilhah became pregnant and presented him with a son.⁶ Rachel named him Dan,* for she said, “God has vindicated me! He has heard my request and given me a son.”⁷ Then Bilhah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a second son.⁸ Rachel named him Naphtali,* for she said, “I have struggled hard with my sister, and I’m winning!”

⁹ Meanwhile, Leah realized that she wasn’t getting pregnant anymore, so she took her servant, Zilpah, and gave her to Jacob as a wife.¹⁰ Soon Zilpah presented him with a son.¹¹ Leah named him Gad,* for she said, “How fortunate I am!”¹² Then Zilpah gave Jacob a second son.¹³ And Leah named him Asher,* for she said, “What joy is mine! Now the other women will celebrate with me.”

¹⁴ One day during the wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes growing in a field and brought them to his mother, Leah. Rachel begged Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.”

¹⁵ But Leah angrily replied, “Wasn’t it enough that you stole my husband? Now will you steal my son’s mandrakes, too?”

Rachel answered, “I will let Jacob sleep with you tonight if you give me some of the mandrakes.”

¹⁶ So that evening, as Jacob was coming home from the fields, Leah went out to meet him. “You must come and sleep with me tonight!” she said. “I have paid for you with some mandrakes that my son found.” So that night he slept with Leah.¹⁷ And God answered Leah’s prayers. She became pregnant again and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob.¹⁸ She named him Issachar,* for she said, “God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband as a wife.”¹⁹ Then Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob.²⁰ She named him Zebulun,* for she said, “God has given me a good reward. Now my husband will treat me with respect, for I have given him six sons.”²¹ Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²² Then God remembered Rachel’s plight and answered her prayers by enabling her to have children.²³ She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. “God has removed my disgrace,” she said.²⁴ And she named him Joseph,* for she said, “May the LORD add yet another son to my family.”

Jacob’s Wealth Increases

²⁵ Soon after Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Please release me so I can

go home to my own country.²⁶ Let me take my wives and children, for I have earned them by serving you, and let me be on my way. You certainly know how hard I have worked for you.”

²⁷ “Please listen to me,” Laban replied. “I have become wealthy, for* the LORD has blessed me because of you.²⁸ Tell me how much I owe you. Whatever it is, I’ll pay it.”

²⁹ Jacob replied, “You know how hard I’ve worked for you, and how your flocks and herds have grown under my care.³⁰ You had little indeed before I came, but your wealth has increased enormously. The LORD has blessed you through everything I’ve done. But now, what about me? When can I start providing for my own family?”

³¹ “What wages do you want?” Laban asked again.

Jacob replied, “Don’t give me anything. Just do this one thing, and I’ll continue to tend and watch over your flocks.³² Let me inspect your flocks today and remove all the sheep and goats that are speckled or spotted, along with all the black sheep. Give these to me as my wages.³³ In the future, when you check on the animals you have given me as my wages, you’ll see that I have been honest. If you find in my flock any goats without speckles or spots, or any sheep that are not black, you will know that I have stolen them from you.”

³⁴ “All right,” Laban replied. “It will be as you say.”³⁵ But that very day Laban went out and removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted or had white patches, and all the black sheep. He placed them in the care of his own sons,³⁶ who took them a three-days’ journey from where Jacob was. Meanwhile, Jacob stayed and cared for the rest of Laban’s flock.

³⁷ Then Jacob took some fresh branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled off strips of bark, making white streaks on them.³⁸ Then he placed these peeled branches in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, for that was where they mated.³⁹ And when they mated in front of the white-streaked branches, they gave birth to young that were streaked, speckled, and spotted.⁴⁰ Jacob separated those lambs from Laban’s flock. And at mating time he turned the flock to face Laban’s animals that were streaked or black. This is how he built his own flock instead of increasing Laban’s.

⁴¹ Whenever the stronger females were ready to mate, Jacob would place the peeled branches in the watering troughs in front of them. Then they would mate in front of the branches.⁴² But he didn’t do this with the weaker ones, so the weaker lambs belonged to Laban, and the stronger ones were Jacob’s.⁴³ As a result, Jacob

30:6 Dan means “he judged” or “he vindicated.” 30:8 Naphtali means “my struggle.” 30:11 Gad means “good fortune.” 30:13 Asher means “happy.” 30:18 Issachar sounds like a Hebrew term that means “reward.” 30:20 Zebulun probably means “honor.” 30:24 Joseph means “may he add.” 30:27 Or I have learned by divination that.