

Day Four

Jacob (whose name will be changed by God to “Israel”) and Esau are the sons of Isaac and the next to get some ink in the Genesis account. Read Genesis 27:41-46 and 28:10-22.

What insight do you get into these two men from these short snapshots?

What do you see about God and what He is doing in their lives from what you read here?

Apparently, even with the poor motives and misguided thinking of these brothers, God’s intended ends are not thwarted. What does this suggest about how God will carry out His promises and designs?

When Jacob later returns to the land of his birth, he ends up having to meet up with Esau—a meeting he dreads. But before that meeting, Jacob meets up with God. Read Genesis 32:22-32.

What do you think God is doing in Jacob’s life in confronting him this way? What ultimately changes in Jacob’s soul?

Jacob’s re-naming by God is recounted in Genesis 35:9-15. How does what God reveals here underscore what He has been doing over dozens and dozens of years in and through the lives of the patriarchs?

How does God identify Himself to Jacob in this encounter? Why does that self-identification matter?

Day Five

Whew! We have covered a great deal of territory in this review of Genesis up to the life of Joseph. We have covered lots of chapters and lots of years.

Why do you think it is helpful to have some sense of the momentum of what God is doing as we enter into a study of the life of Joseph?

Why does it matter that we read Joseph’s life as *part of what God is doing* and not merely a “stand alone” account of one life?

When you read the Bible—like the passages we have been exploring from Genesis—do you think of yourself as *in the story line that God began with the patriarchs*? Why or why not?

Think back over what we have been reading about Abraham and Isaac and Esau and Jacob. What things did God promise to and through them that could well have impact on you and your life and your family?

What things did God begin in and through these patriarchs that has bearing on our world today?

Why does it matter that we understand our lives as *part of what God is doing* and not merely a “stand alone” account of one life?

# Thinking About Sunday’s Message

Day One

It has been some time since we have been in the book of Genesis. We return, to round out the account of “the patriarchs” (those who were considered to be the “fathers” of the nation of Israel). Let’s try and gain some perspective about what God is doing in and through these patriarchs by reviewing some of the earlier sections of Genesis.

Abraham is often considered the father of the Jewish race, although the people descended from him are not identified specifically as Jews until some time later. But let’s explore how things began with Abraham.

Read Genesis 12:1-8.

How does Abraham’s (he was called Abram before God changed his name), journey with God begin?

What is it that God indicates He is doing in and through Abraham’s life?

God reiterates and builds on the promises He made to Abraham in Genesis 15:1-16.

What further clarification does God offer about what He intends to do in and through Abraham?

If we were paying close attention to what God had revealed, what would we anticipate being played out in the lives of those who grew out of Abraham's lineage? What should we be watching for?

Knowing that God "launched" something in the life of Abraham that has implications, for not only him but for the entire planet, how does such awareness impact the way you think about God's activity on the earth here and now, in our day and time?

#### *Day Two*

A staggering and defining event in Abraham's journey with God occurred after the birth of his promised son, Isaac. Read Genesis 22:1-19.

God has made it abundantly clear to Abraham, over the years, that He will be Abraham's God (and no other) and that He will provide for Abraham (and so he can rest in God). What do you think God is doing in calling Abraham to take these steps? How does it fall in line with what God has been seeking to teach Abraham?

What insight do you get into what is going on in Abraham's heart through his "confessions" found in verses 5 and 8? What do his words tell you about what he is thinking?

Do you think God knew what Abraham would do? Why?

What does Abraham's "naming" of the place (verse 14) tell you about what he knows and thinks about God? How does that build on what God has been teaching Abraham?

What does God reaffirm to Abraham subsequent to the sacrifice? What further clarification does He offer about what He is going to do in and through Abraham and his descendants?

God is not "playing games" with Abraham. This journey Abraham is on is for him to come to know God better and for him to come to understand in a deeper way how to participate with God in what He wants to do. What insights can you take away from Abraham's experiences that might lead you on in your journey with God?

#### *Day Three*

Abraham's son, Isaac, also has a number of encounters with God where the Lord reveals something of what He is planning on doing. Let's explore a few of those encounters. Read Genesis 26:1-5 and 26:23-25.

What echoes of God's words to Abraham do you detect in what He says to Isaac?

How do you think Isaac would have understood what God was doing in and through his life?

Read the following account of Isaac's blessing of his sons: Genesis 27:1-40.

How do you understand what happened in these exchanges? What do you think Isaac is really doing?

How do Isaac's actions fit in with what God has been saying to him and to his father, Abraham?

Read Hebrews 11:20 where we get a short New Testament "commentary" on Isaac. What does this passage tell you about what Isaac did with his sons?

In what way do you think that Isaac's blessing of his sons was "in faith"? What does that mean?

Although Isaac may not have fully understood what God was doing and he may not have acted with full awareness of the implications of his actions, Isaac still lived as if he were part of God's bigger story. In that way, he lived "in faith"—dependent on and looking to God, the God who had promised and who was at work in the world. How can this picture of Isaac help you press into a deeper trust in God in your own life today?