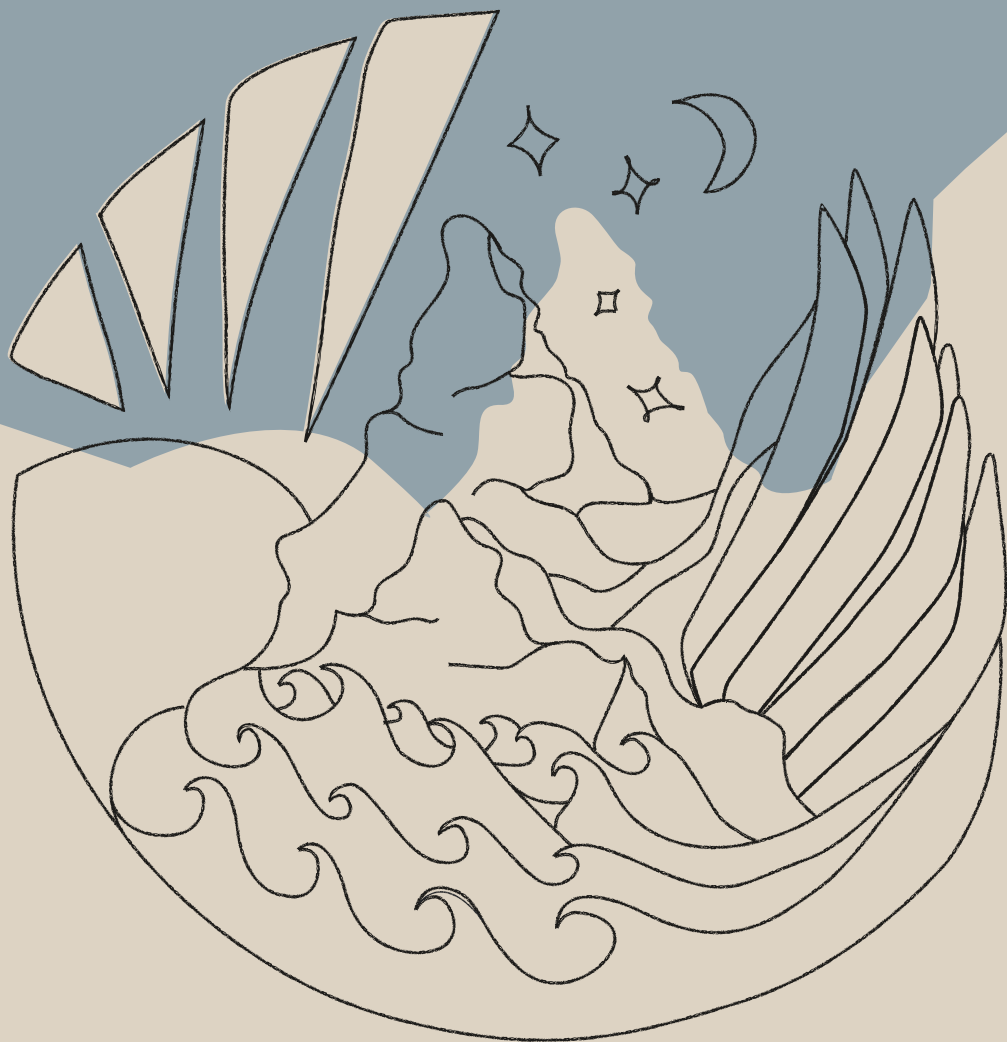


# The Master Storyteller



Genesis 12-50

**‘You intended to  
harm me, but God  
intended it for good  
to accomplish what is  
now being done, the  
saving of many lives’**

**Gen 50:20**

# How to use this book:

## Personal Devotions

- Use this book to help you read your Bible every day. You will find a guide that will help you read through scriptures related to our sermon series. Scribble down your thoughts and questions and remember to pray and ask God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His Word. Additionally, we've recommended a verse to memorise each week.
- Listen to our Spotify playlist by searching for the 'The Bridge Church – Songs We Sing' playlist.

## Connect Groups

- Take this guide with you to your Connect Group each week. Bible Studies are provided at the back of the booklet, so you could use this space to write down comments, questions and prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group.

## Church

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

# Dear Church,

Charles Spurgeon reminds us to “Remember the goodness of God in the frost of adversity”. As we continue in our Year of Goodness, my prayer is that whatever circumstance or situation you find yourself in, you’d be able to say ‘God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good’.

I’d encourage you to keep using your Goodness Journals to record daily 3 ways you’ve seen God’s goodness, and 1 way you’ve had opportunity to do good. As Titus helpfully reminded us, we are to be a people ‘careful to devote themselves to doing what is good’ (Titus 3:8). I’m so looking forward to hearing more stories of God’s goodness.

This term we are preaching through Genesis 12-50, the wonderful story of how God fulfils his promise to bless the world through the imperfect people of Abraham and his dysfunctional, messed up family. It’s a roller-coaster ride, but I’m so excited to see how God might shape and shake us as we dig deep into His Word. My prayer is that we might encounter God in these narratives, be reminded of His presence, His provision, His protection, His providence. And my prayer is also that we’d see our own failings and dysfunctionality, yet marvel again at God’s faithfulness.

There are many wonderful ministry opportunities for Term 2 which I commend to you:

- The Alpha Course starting on 2nd May. This term we are praying for 100 guests at our course, with English, Farsi and Mandarin available. Who can you invite and pray for?
- Seminars on Marriage, Family Discipleship and our Living Single Event.
- For our Kids: Mega Monday (pupil free activity day); our regular Playtime (Mon & Thurs & Fri), Bridge Kids (Fri) and Kids Church (Sun).
- For our Youth: KYCK camp; our regular Ignite Youth (Fri) and Ignite Connect (Sun).
- Our ongoing Community Outreach ministries to Greenway, to the Aged Care homes and Everyday English.

Of course, none of these ministries can happen without being undergirded and driven by prayer – so I continue to encourage you to prioritize Central Prayer on the 1st Wednesday of each month, rotating around our 3 locations.

With love in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. D. Don". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

# Overview of Genesis 12-50

Genesis 12-50 is the wonderful story of God fulfilling his promises to bless His world through the imperfect people of Abraham and his dysfunctional, messed up family!

## Historical Setting:

Whilst some people have categorized these chapters as 'just stories without any historical accuracy', most scholars are convinced these are 'historical stories from between 2000-1700BC'. This is supported by archaeological discoveries in Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine with names like Haran, Ishmael, Benjamin and Jacob, which parallel the text.

## Literary Form:

There are 3 different forms of writing within Genesis 12-50

- a) Historical narrative: This main form is simply telling the stories of the main characters, who are far from perfect and full of flaws!
- b) Poetic pieces (e.g. 16:11-12, 25:23, 27:27-29, 39-40, 49:1-27)
- c) Genealogies, which explain the relationship between the chosen and non-chosen families e.g. Ishmael (25:12) & Isaac (25:19); Esau (36:1-9) & Jacob (37:2).

## Context:

Genesis 1-11 is identified as 'The Primeval history', with a focus on God's Creation and humankind in general (Gen 1:1-6:5), God's promises through Noah (Gen 6:6-11:9), and God scattering his people across the earth (Gen 11).

Genesis 12-50 is known as 'The Patriarchal History', with a focus on God's relationship with His world through 'the Israelites' (Abraham – Gen 12-25, Isaac – Gen 24-27, Jacob – Gen 27-36, and Joseph – Gen 37-50), as well as God's interactions with other nations e.g. Canaanites (12:6, 18-19), Egyptians (12:10-20, 39-50), Philistines (20:1-18, 21:22-34), Arameans (29-31), Edomites and Ishmaelites (25, 36).

# Overview: The story of the Patriarchs

## 1. ABRAHAM'S STORY: A story of FAITH

Abraham is the Father of the faithful, and the main theme is righteousness (being acceptable to God). In Genesis 12, Abraham is called by God (7 times God appears to Abraham in Gen 12-25), with the sevenfold blessings of that call (Abram would be the father of a great nation; he would be blessed in his lifetime; his name would be renowned; he would be a blessing to others; those who honour him would be blessed; those who rejected him would be cursed; and his influence would be universal).

Aged 75, Abraham was obedient, leaving Ur and heading to Haran. There are two constant items that accompany him: a tent (a symbol of pilgrimage) and an altar (a symbol of fellowship with God). In Gen 15, God reiterates His promises, with 15:6 being a key verse - 'Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness'. Whilst in Gen 15, Abraham is presented as a man of great faith, in Gen 16 he is the man of the flesh. After 12 years of waiting for a child, he took things into his own hands and slept with his maidservant Hagar.

In Gen 17, we have the great covenant of circumcision and God reveals himself as 'El Shaddai', the all-sufficient one. Whilst Abraham is foolish and lies (Gen 20), God fulfils His promise with the birth of Isaac (Gen 21). Abraham's faith is tested in Gen 22, when God asks him to sacrifice his only Son, yet provides a sacrificial substitute. Abraham dies aged 175 and is buried by Ishmael and Isaac.

## 2. ISAAC'S STORY: A story of PEACE YET WEAKNESS

Isaac is dwelling in the land, enjoying God's provision. Isaac is heir to the promises, yet he repeats his father's failures (he lies about Rebekah in Gen 26). He distributes the blessings, but is deceived by the mastermind of his wife (Gen 27).

### 3. JACOB'S STORY: A Story of SANCTIFICATION

Jacob is a wonderful example of the struggle of the two natures within him. His is naturally cunning, self-centred and shrewd (living up to his name as the heel-catcher), yet he also hungers for a spiritual relationship with God. There are three main elements to Jacob's story.

a) Jacob the deceiver.

In Gen 27, God told Rebekah that the older would serve the younger. Esau, the older son, is a man of the field, hunter, hairy, ruddy; Jacob, the younger, is a quiet, homely lad. Whilst Esau as the firstborn has the right to the blessings, he traded his birthright for a bowl of stew.

b) Jacob the deceived.

Gen 28 is a picture of God's faithfulness and love. God appears in the dream of a ladder with angels ascending and descending (a picture of communion with God). God reveals his love to Jacob by sanctifying him. Whilst Jacob thought he was alone and uncared for, God was with him, loving him and seeking to help him. Gen 29-31 is a picture of God's loving discipline – with deception from his uncle Laban and 20 years of suffering and struggle – yet Jacob continues to praise God.

c) Jacob the man of God.

In Gen 32-33, Jacob returns to the land of promise; where he wrestles with God. Jacob is renamed 'Israel', which means 'He who prevails with God'. God is indeed his strength and refuge, a very present help in times of trouble!

### 4. JOSEPH'S STORY: A Story of SALVATION

Joseph is the forerunner! He is sent into Egypt to prepare the way for the 12 tribes. Yet he is also the forerunner to Jesus, in that he was beloved by his father yet rejected by his people; Jacob sees him as 'died and brought back to life again as triumphant king'; and Joseph forgives his brothers and saves them from certain death!



In Gen 37, the 17 year old Joseph is working as a shepherd. He's clearly his father's favourite son (the coat!), but he's bitterly hated by his brothers. God gave Joseph two special dreams in which he is elevated above his brothers. His brothers sought to kill him, tossed him into a pit to die, sold him for 20 pieces of silver, dipped his coat in the blood of a goat, and deceived their father into thinking he was dead. (note: Gen 38 is a chapter of degradation and depravity).

Down in Egypt, Joseph is a man of excellent character and is placed in a position of trust and responsibility, but Potiphar's wife unsuccessfully tries to seduce him – Joseph's response is 'How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?' (Gen 39:9). Joseph is thrown into prison, yet we are told 'The Lord was with Joseph' (Gen 40). In prison he interprets dreams for the baker and the butler, and 2 years later he is released after Pharaoh has a dream and the butler 'remembered' Joseph. Pharaoh's dream predicted 7 years of plenty, followed by 7 years of famine. Joseph finds himself, aged 30, as second ruler in the kingdom!

The rest of Genesis details the story of forgiveness, restoration and grace, as Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers, and is reunited with his father, Jacob. Gen 50 ends with the body of Jacob taken up to Canaan and Joseph's coffin being in Egypt. The key verse is Gen 50:20 'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives'.

## **Important Themes in Genesis 12-50**

### **1. COVENANT PROMISE**

God initiates His plans to rescue humanity through His covenant with the family of Abram (Gen 12, 15, 17). Gen 12:1-3 is a key moment, when God chooses one family out of the scattered nations from Gen 11, so that He can rescue all nations. The promise is of a nation (12:1, 15:5, 17:1-8), a land (12:7,

15:17-21) and blessing (12:3, 18:18, 22:18), with the theme of blessing being a significant throughout these chapters. Of course, Ephesians 1:3 reminds us of all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ.

## **2. HUMAN UNFAITHFULNESS**

These chapters recount the sin and folly of the family of Abraham, as they constantly put God's promises in jeopardy. Abraham is abusive and manipulative (12 & 20), Sarah tries to force God's hand (16 & 21), Isaac gives away his wife (26), Jacob is a thief, a liar and gains the blessings by stealing (25 & 27), and Joseph's brothers try to kill him (37). This family is SO dysfunctional that these divine promises can only be fulfilled through God's faithfulness, not theirs!

## **3. GOD'S PRESENCE**

At critical moments throughout the story, God's people experience His presence. God appears to them, speaks to them, guides them, and reiterates the promises. Even when there's not a direct appearance from YHWH, we're told 'The Lord was with him' (Joseph), or 'God was with Ishmael' (Gen 21:20).

## **4. GOD'S COMMITMENT & INTERVENTION**

God is fully committed to this family and His promises, and He constantly intervenes to rescue them. So God RESCUES Sarah (twice) and Rebekah from the folly of their husbands (Gen 12:17-20; 20:6-10; 26:8-10). God PROVIDES an heir for Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18, 21). God PROVIDES a sacrifice instead of Isaac (Gen 22). God PROTECTS Jacob despite his selfishness and deception (Gen 27-35). God TRANSFORMS Jacob. And God USES the evil intention of Joseph's brothers for something good, that will save the lives of people from many nations (Gen 50).

## 5. God's PATTERN of working through the unexpected people

It is not the firstborn sons who are the vehicle of His promise – but the unexpected children e.g. Abel, not Cain; Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau; Joseph, not Reuben. God often moves toward those who are rejected by society e.g. Hagar and Ishmael (21:8-20), Leah the unloved wife (29:31-35), Joseph the despised brother (37-50).

## 6. OBEDIENCE

Faith will show itself in obedience. Because Abraham believed and trusted God's promises, he went to Canaan (12:4-5), brought the animals for the covenant ceremony (15:7-21), circumcised people (17:1-27), listened to counsel regarding Ishmael (21:11-16), and even took Isaac to be sacrificed (22). This obedience is continued in the Isaac-Jacob stories.

# Sermon 1: Genesis 12-17

Sunday 30th April

Notes:

**Bible readings:**

Monday: Genesis 12

Tuesday: Genesis 13

Wednesday: Genesis 14

Thursday: Genesis 15

Friday: Genesis 16

**Memory verse:**

‘Abram believed the Lord and he credited it to him as righteousness’  
(Gen 15:6)

# Sermon 2: Genesis 15-21

Sunday 7th May

Notes:

**Bible readings:**

Monday: Genesis 17

Tuesday: Genesis 18

Wednesday: Genesis 19

Thursday: Genesis 20

Friday: Genesis 21

**Memory verse:**

'Abram believed the Lord and he credited it to him as righteousness'  
(Gen 15:6)

# Sermon 3: Genesis 22

Sunday 14th May

Notes:



**Bible readings:**

Monday: Genesis 22

Tuesday: Genesis 23

Wednesday: Genesis 24

Thursday: Genesis 25:1-18

Friday: Genesis 25:19-34

**Memory verse:**

'Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide' (Genesis 22:14)

# Sermon 4: Genesis 24-26

Sunday 21st May

Notes:

**Bible readings:**

Monday: Genesis 26:1-33

Tuesday: Genesis 26:34-27:29

Wednesday: Genesis 27:30-28:9

Thursday: Genesis 28:10-22

Friday: Genesis 29:1-30

**Memory verse:**

'Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide' (Genesis 22:14)

# Sermon 5: Genesis 25-29

Sunday 28th May

Notes:

**Bible readings:**

Monday: Genesis 29:31-30:24

Tuesday: Genesis 30:25-43

Wednesday: Genesis 31:1-21

Thursday: Genesis 31:22-55

Friday: Genesis 32:1-20

**Memory verse:**

‘The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress’ (Psalm 46:11)

# Sermon 6: Genesis 29

Sunday 4th June

Notes:

**Bible readings:**

Monday: Genesis 32:22-32

Tuesday: Genesis 33

Wednesday: Genesis 34

Thursday: Genesis 35

Friday: Genesis 36

**Memory verse:**

‘The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress’ (Psalm 46:11)

# Sermon 7: Genesis 29:31-33:20

Sunday 11th June

Notes:



**Bible readings:**

Monday: Genesis 37

Tuesday: Genesis 38

Wednesday: Genesis 39

Thursday: Genesis 40

Friday: Genesis 41:1-40

**Memory verse:**

'How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?' (Genesis 39:9)

# Sermon 8: Genesis 37-41

Sunday 18th June

Notes:

**Bible readings:**

Monday: Genesis 41:41-57

Tuesday: Genesis 42

Wednesday: Genesis 43

Thursday: Genesis 44

Friday: Genesis 45

**Memory verse:**

‘You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives’ (Gen 50:20)

# Sermon 9: Genesis 42-50

Sunday 25th June

Notes:

**Bible readings:**

Monday: Genesis 46

Tuesday: Genesis 47

Wednesday: Genesis 48

Thursday: Genesis 49

Friday: Genesis 50

**Memory verse:**

'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives' (Gen 50:20)

# Connect Group Study I

## Genesis 12-17 - Abraham (part I)

### Promise:

*'For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.'* 2 Cor 1:20

### Go Deeper:

God's Big Picture - Vaughn Roberts (a classic of biblical theology, helping us to see the whole picture of Scripture, of which this story is so pivotal)

Recap Gen 1-11, and all that has brought us to this point of Abraham. What are we worried about? What are we expecting to happen? What are we hoping for?

These verses may be familiar to you but come to them afresh.  
Read Gen 12:1-9.

How would you respond if God spoke to you tangibly to say 'leave everything and everyone that you know and love behind, and go to a new unknown place'?

Why do you think God makes these specific promises in 12:2-3? How do they tap into Gen 1-11? Why would they appeal to Abram, the ancient near eastern man of ~2500 B.C.?

These promises and this commitment from God to Abram are the bedrock upon which all the promises of God are built. How does this show up in the NT? How does the gospel take, expand, and fulfill these promises?

Does God still call people to step out into the unknown with faith? What's your experience?

How have you experienced the promises of God? How do you depend on the promises of God in your life? What promises of God are closest to your heart?

**Pray where God has been leading you.**

# Connect Group Study 2

## Genesis 15-21 - Sarah and Hagar

### Faithfulness:

*'He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.'* Psalm 91:4

### Go Deeper:

Gentle & Lowly – Dane Ortlund (a beautiful book on the heart of Jesus that captures his faithfulness to us in every way)

Read Gen 16:1-16 & 18:1-15 & 21:1-7. Recap the Sarah/Hagar debacle (Gen 15-21).

Have you ever doubted the promises of God? Or felt forgotten by God? When/why?

What do you notice about Sarai's rationale to have Abram sleep with Hagar?

Put yourself in Hagar's position. A foreign slave, given as an object for sex, mistreated by her mistress and dismissed by the father of her unborn child.

Hagar is the first person to name God in Scripture. El Roi: the God who sees me (16:13-14). How is this significant for our understanding of God?



Are you surprised that God still fulfills the promise to Sarah after all that's happened?

How does Jesus reverse the position of Hagar? Embody the promise to Sarah?

What should we do when we feel forgotten by God? How do we remain faithful in those seasons?

What do you need to hear from these encounters about the faithfulness of God toward you? From Hagar? Sarah?

**Pray where God has been leading you.**

# Connect Group Study 3

## Genesis 22 - Abraham (part 2)

### Obedience:

*'Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.'* James 1:2-4

*'When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.'* Dietrich Bonhoeffer

### Go Deeper:

Tim Keller's sermon on Genesis 22

Do you find obedience to God easy or hard? Why?

Read Gen 22:1-19. What are your reactions to this story?

Put yourself in Abraham's position. He has longed for Isaac for decades. He is his only son now that he has sent Ishmael away. Without a son, all of God's promises melt away. Not even mentioning that he will bear the knife that takes his son's life.

What do you think was going through Abraham's mind? If God was going to intervene, why did he put Abraham through all of that?

Why do you think God allows us to fall into situations where obedience is so difficult?

There is a beautiful irony here. It seemed God would take what was most precious to Abraham. Yet the end of the story leads to Abraham naming the place 'The LORD will provide' (22:14), with God refreshing his promises of abundance.

How have you experienced God's provision or kindness through or after times of testing?

There are obviously so many parallels to Jesus. How does this chapter help you understand the heart of God in sacrificing his Son?

How do we cultivate lives of obedience, and faithfulness through the trials of life?

**Pray where God has been leading you.**

# Connect Group Study 4

## Genesis 24-26 - Isaac

### Discernment:

*God is not a distant observer of the world he created, nor a spectator enjoying our pain for sport. He is actively involved to achieve his purposes and the ultimate good of his people.*

*'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.'* Rom 8:28

### Go Deeper:

Read through the book of Acts and observe every instance that God overtly or covertly directs the church

Hearing God - Dallas Willard (a helpful book unpacking the biblical milieu of God's speaking & leading of his people)

Has God ever led you or spoken to you tangibly about a decision or direction in your life?

Read Gen 24:1-67. Recap the Isaac story (Gen 24-26).

How does God work to bring Rebekah to Isaac? Why would the Eternal God occupy himself with a man finding a wife?

Should we expect God to work in the same way today? What's different between Gen 24 and our situation now? What's the same?

Does God still intervene in the world to direct the path of his people? Why/why not?

Does he use the ordinary happenings of our lives to lead us forward into the places he would have us go? How do we know when it's God at work in our lives, rather than wishful thinking on our part?

How do we cultivate the discernment to identify when God is at work in order to heed his leading?

What does the Isaac/Rebekah story teach us about God's commitment to us?

**Pray where God has been leading you.**

# Connect Group Study 5

## Genesis 25-29 – Jacob (Part 1)

### Election:

*‘The biblical doctrine of election is that before Creation God selected out of the human race, foreseen as fallen, those whom he would redeem, bring to faith, justify, and glorify in and through Jesus Christ (Rom 8:28-39, Eph 1:3-14, 2 Thess 2:13-14, 2 Tim 1:9-10): J.I. Packer*

### Go Deeper:

Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God – J.I. Packer (an incredible short book that everyone who wrestles with how Scripture simultaneously presents God’s sovereignty & humanity’s responsibility should read)

Read Romans 9

Read Gen 27:1-28:9. Recap the first half of Jacob’s story (Gen 25-29)  
What’s your gut reaction to the Jacob/Esau situation? How does it sit with you?

“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the LORD. “Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals.” Malachi 1:2-3

How do we make sense of God’s choosing Jacob over Esau as a father of his people? Or choosing Israel over other nations to be his people?

*'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.'* Eph 1:3-6

How do we make sense of God's predestining some before the creation of the world to be saved?

We obviously can't unpack everything. But how do you make sense of the tension between God's sovereignty and human's responsibility for sin? Can humanity have a genuine choice if God is completely in control?

How do Jacob and this theology of election offer hope & assurance?

How should election shape our view of the Christian life? Evangelism? People?

**Pray where God has been leading you.**

# Connect Group Study 6

## Genesis 29 – Leah

### Beloved:

*'And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.'*  
Eph 3:17-18

### Go Deeper:

Gentle and Lowly - Dane Ortlund (I know this book was recommended previously, but seriously it's really great)

Do you ever doubt the love of God for you? When have you felt that way?

Read Gen 29:14b-30:24. What stands out to you from this story?

What do we do with all the polygamy and servant-loving of Genesis? Is this being condoned by Scripture?

What stands out to you about Leah? What does her example teach us about the love of God?



What stands out to you about Rachel? What does her example teach us about the love of God?

‘...God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.’ Romans 5:5

How is the love of God different from the love of people? What do we do when we don’t feel the love of God?

Take a moment to reflect personally.

- Faced with loneliness, despair, or isolation like Leah: is the love of God enough for you?
- Are you satisfied with the love of God above all other loves?

**Pray that God would pour his love into your heart through the Holy Spirit.**

# Connect Group Study 7

## Genesis 29:31 - 33:20 - Jacob (part 2)

### Wrestling:

*'What do you really need from God right now? What blessing do you want from him? How badly do you want it? There are times when God only releases his blessings on us after a season of prolonged and even painful wrestling with him.'* Jon Bloom

### Go Deeper:

Will you Wrestle with God? - Jon Bloom (an article from Desiring God)

Wrestling with God, Acquiring a Limp - Jeremy Berg (an article from Christianity Today)

Read Gen 32:1-32. Recap the second half of Jacob's story (Gen 29:31-33:20).

This biblical wrestling match seems weird. Do you think Jacob knew he was wrestling with God? Why do you think it happens at this specific point in the story?

What's significant about the name change from 'Jacob' (deceiver) to 'Israel' (struggles with God)? Why do you think this new name also becomes the central name for God's people?

Have you ever had a period of ‘wrestling with God’ in prayer? A desperation, a longing, or a need where only God could help you? What was it like?

Why do you think God wanted Jacob to wrestle with him? Why do you think God makes us wrestle with him in certain seasons? What’s the significance of the limp he receives?

How does Jacob begin the night pre-wrestle? How does he finish the night post-wrestle?

Take a minute to reflect for yourself. How would you describe your relationship with God & your prayer life? Where have you been passive, frustrated, or distant from God? How might he be challenging you to wrestle with him?

**Pray where God has been leading you.**

# Connect Group Study 8

## Genesis 37-41 - Joseph (part 1)

### Presence:

*The mystery of God's presence: he is present everywhere, yet also present uniquely at specific moments in history; he is always present spiritually in the lives of believers, yet there are many moments where his presence is tangibly experienced in a unique way.*

### Go Deeper:

Practicing the Presence of God - Brother Lawrence (short 17th century classic)

My Rock My Refuge - Tim Keller (daily devotion from the Psalms)

The Valley of Vision (Puritan prayers to seek God in every season)

Read Gen 37:1-11. Recap the first half of Joseph's story (Gen 37-41).

*'Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined. But while Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.'* Gen 39:20-21

What does it mean that the Lord is with Joseph? What does it mean that God is 'with us'?

Do you easily feel or notice the presence of God in your life? When or when not?

Theological truths that are true right now:

- The Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in every believer. (John 14:16, Eph 1:13-14)
- The church together is God's temple where God's Spirit dwells. (1 Cor 3:16)
- Right now, Christians are 'in Christ'. We have been spiritually made one with our Saviour.
- But there is a future moment when Jesus will return so that we might be with God forever. (John 14:18, Rev 21)

Should we feel the presence of God as part of the Lord being with us?  
Should we seek or pray for the tangible presence of God in our lives?

*'How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?' Psalm 13:1-2*

'The Dark Night of the Soul' is a common feature in the Christian life where God feels distant in a season of suffering. How do we continue in the faith when we don't feel God with us?

*'I cannot imagine how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of the presence of God... Think often on God, by day, by night, in your business and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave him not alone.'*  
Brother Lawrence

Get practical. How do we 'practice the presence of God' in everyday life?

**Pray where God has been leading you.**

# Connect Group Study 9

## Gen 42-50 Joseph (pt. 2)

### Providence:

*God's providence is the divine power of God directing everything for the purpose of his will. Providence forces us to wrestle with suffering & evil on one hand, and the power & control of God on the other. Joseph is the great OT example that's magnified in Jesus.*

*'God is completely in charge of his world. His hand may be hidden but his rule is absolute.'* J.I. Packer

### Go Deeper:

The Problem of Pain - C.S. Lewis (classic on making sense of the tension between suffering & God)

Providence - Paul Helm (a concise theological essay in the Gospel Coalition)

Providence - John Piper (large work of theology unpacking providence in Scripture)

Read Gen 50:15-26. Recap the second half of Joseph's story (Gen 42-50).

Looking over Joseph's story, what does it teach you about your story?

Do you think God stands behind everything that happens in the world? Why/why not?

How has God turned bad things in your life for good purposes?

Have you ever felt doubt or frustration with problems in your life knowing that God is in control? How do you deal with those feelings?

*'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.'* Rom 8:28

This is a beautiful verse. But one that can sound patronising in the midst of severe suffering. How do we reconcile Rom 8:28 when we can't see any clear good coming from our suffering?

*'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'* Gen 50:20

How do you see Jesus in Joseph? How does that help us make sense of our lives when suffering doesn't make sense?

**Pray where God has been leading you.**

# Personal Reflection

## Following our Genesis series

How has our series changed your view of:

- God: Father, Son & Spirit?
- Yourself?
- The world in which we live?

How could our series help you in seeing & showing God's goodness?

What is one area you have changed in your thinking or actions, because of this series?

What is one question that you still have?



# Giving at Church

As we study Genesis this term, we come across the first reference to tithing in the Bible:

*'And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand. Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.'* Gen 14:20

By offering this tithe, Abram shows faithfulness to God, acknowledging that God had given him the victory.

God has been gracious and generous to us, and we are called to give back. The generosity of our ten congregations across the three sites of Kirribilli, Neutral Bay and Macquarie Park, generates over 90% of our income.

Through our own joyful giving, we are able to fund a wide range of ministries both locally and around the world. Locally we use the gifts to welcome new people through our Belonging, Christianity Explored and Alpha courses, run children's and youth programs, take the gospel into our local community to care for a wide range of needs and to provide a physical, pastoral presence in the lives of people in our neighbourhood. Further afield, we support over 20 mission partners financially as they spread the good news of Jesus from Albania to Zimbabwe.

It is with your continued support that we can continue to grow as a church and reach more people to share the gospel.

If you don't yet give to this work and would like to, we'd encourage you to consider giving electronically using the following details below or to talk to any of the staff team to find out more.

We thank you for your continued and intentional generous giving.

You can give by using our bank account details or the QR code below, or head to our website for more details, including the option to give by credit card.

[thebridgechurch.org.au/give](https://thebridgechurch.org.au/give).

Bank Account details

The Bridge Church

BSB: 032-099

Account number: 637189



**‘Abram believed  
the Lord and he  
credited it to him as  
righteousness’**

**Gen 15:6**



*The* Bridge Church