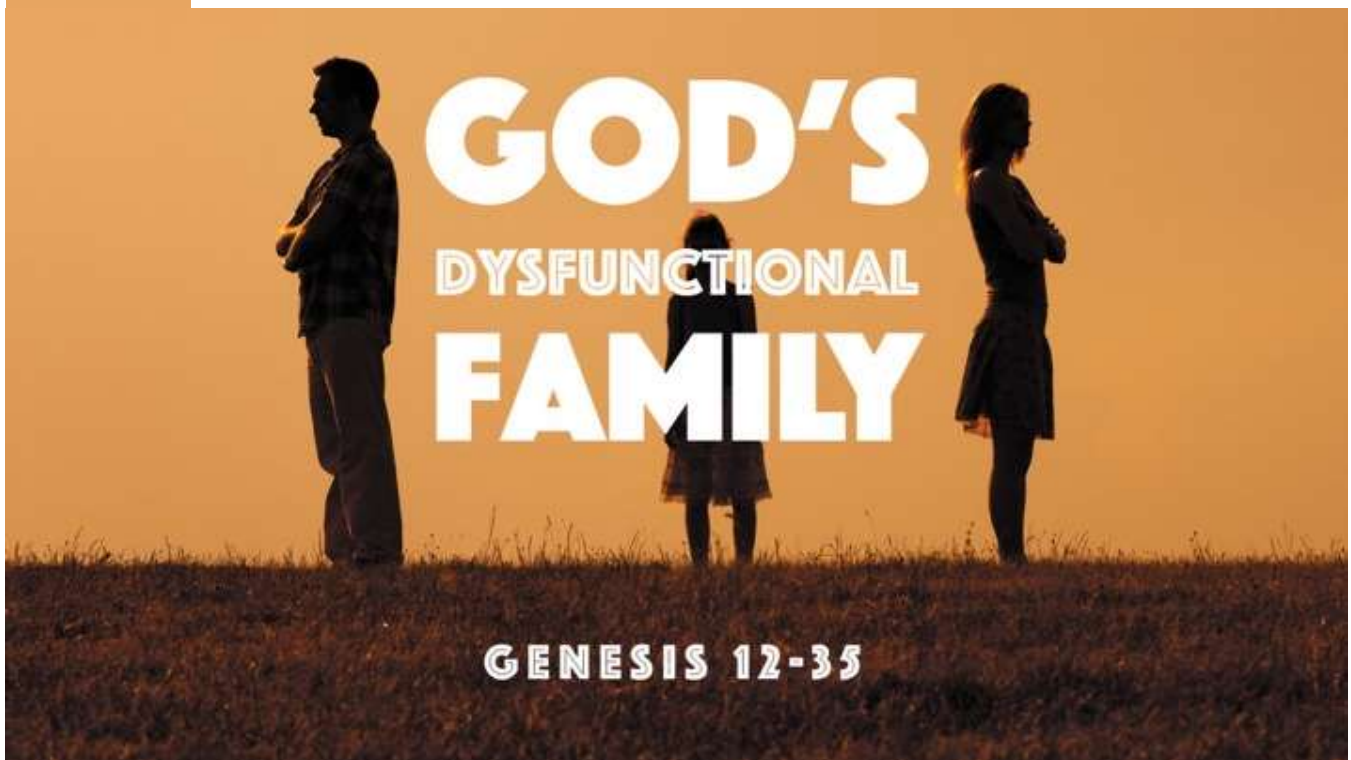
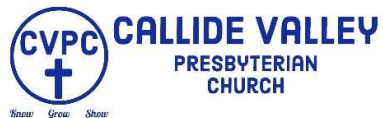


Growth
Group
Booklet



Term 2

2024



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Series Introduction

What do you think of Genesis? It's the first book in the Bible. It means 'the beginning'. And this term we're taking a 10-episode journey through this book of beginnings. What do you think when you hear 'Genesis'?

It might be creation. The first 2 chapters (of 50) certainly are about creation. We see order from chaos, light from darkness, land and life from formless void. There's the first human family. The first wedding. The first job. The first children. The first sin... in chapter 3. Maybe you think of 'The Fall' of humanity, the problem of evil that begins in Genesis, or suffering, wondering where it comes from.

There's Cain's murder of Abel that follows in chapter 4, and then chapters 5-11 track a vicious spiral of sin and suffering – down all the generations and descendants of Adam, to Noah. We're told in chapter 6 that it gets so bad, God agonised over people, the pinnacle of his creation:

5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil, all the time. 6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

Maybe when you hear 'Genesis', you think of the great flood that resulted from God's agony: God's judgement on the Human race. Perhaps you recall the Tower of Babel in chapter 11 – the peak of arrogance of humankind.

When I was 17, and they gave me a Bible, the only 'Genesis' I knew was the famous rock band with Phil Collins. I began to read the Bible like any other book and I started at the beginning: Genesis. But it wasn't long, before I was drowning.

Genesis was agonising. It's full of abandonment and abuse, anxiety and anger, anguish and avoidance, barrenness and blaming. There's childhood trauma, defensiveness and denial, emotional fusion, fear and famine, idolatry and judgement, lying and longing, manipulation and mocking, sibling rivalry and fakery, polygamy and playing favourites. There's shaming. Slavery. Women's subjugation. Sacrifice and secrecy, tension and triangulation. There's sin everywhere and suffering all over the place! Even just reading chapters 1 to 11, I kept thinking: Is there ANY hope for this world?

But then the story slows right down and zooms in on one man. The rollercoaster ride hits chapter 12, God's promises of hope:

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;

I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse;

and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

What is Genesis all about? Hope! If you need hope in your world, you need to journey through Genesis 12-35 with us this term, to see the hope of God's blessings, through Abram and his dysfunctional family, to all the families of the earth. Because God decides not to give up on humanity but redeem it. And he promises to Abram, around 4000 years ago, to do something about our sinful and suffering world, *with him. Through Abram.* And *involving* his family. God chooses to work both through, and despite, their dysfunction.

Here're a few things to keep in mind, as we journey in 'God's Dysfunctional Family'. First, pick up on the **Patterns**. Relational patterns. In episode 1, for example, we see a pattern in Abram that reminds us of Adam. Each week we'll look for patterns.

Second, in each episode we'll consider **Family Dysfunction**. In episode 1 we see deception by Abram, manipulation of his wife, and the result in cursing instead of blessing.

Thirdly, we'll also look for **Healthy Relationships**. For example, what Abram learns in the first episode with Pharaoh, challenges him to behave better with Lot, in the next. Because God's got Abram on the agonising journey of growing up in his relationships.

To help us along the way, each week in our growth groups we'll also look at a '**Family Relationship Concept**'. Episode 1, for example, teaches the Latin word 'Angere'. It means 'to constrict the blood flow – 'can't think straight'. We get 3 words from angere, that we're all too familiar with: anger, anxiety and anguish. Abram reacts out of fear – anxiety. We want to see this in Abram, as well as God's grace, and applies these concepts in our lives. See the table in the pages following.

God's got Abram and his family on a journey. It's the journey of growing up and getting healthy and being transformed – but he's also on a physical journey from place to place. So, we've included a map to help you follow Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's journey. We hope it's helpful.

On the journey, you need to look out for **altars, naming people and places**. Don't brush past these but slow down your reading. When someone builds an altar, this is huge in the story – so check the Bible footnotes to see what it means. When someone names another person in the ancient world, that was sacred, for to name someone was an expression of authority over them. (Keep that in mind for when God renames Jacob, to Israel.) Same for places. Often a place is named several times, and we need to ask why. Genesis is full of questions. We'll learn together.

As well as the map, we've chucked in a '**Cultural Differences**' table comparing our culture with Abram's (our Modern West, with his Ancient Near East). They're vastly different. That's ok. In fact, it's a good thing and will help us learn what God is doing in our lives, in our time. Check it out.

Here are 3 examples of cultural differences that we'll explain along the way: the link between **fertility and blessing**, **polygamy** (having multiple wives) and **polytheism** – which means that what was normal back then was having multiple gods. Everyone had lots of gods. That Abram and his family would come to believe in just one God is the central and most radical idea that Genesis introduced to the world, and we take it for granted. Of course, God has now revealed himself to the world through Jesus – the One in whom all the promises of Abraham are being fulfilled.

Finally, in each episode, we're not looking for the moral of the story. We're not trying to pretend Abraham is perfect or to protect Rebekah from scrutiny. The story invites it! Don't be afraid to ask the tough questions in Genesis. We're not looking for a moral to the story but to learn from their mistakes, and to see God's grace for our lives. This means that every episode will climax with what healthy identity and relationships look like, in Jesus.

Our big idea for the whole series is:

***God is transforming our relationships, promising blessing to the world
through the agony of growing up in Abraham's family.***

This includes you and me. God, through Jesus Christ, is in the business of transforming us and our relationships. To bring blessing, so that we can be a blessing.

But how does he do this? Like he does in Abram's family – through the agony of growing up. Of getting healthy. Of maturing in Jesus, as he demands we face up to our failures. Like we'll see with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: by God holding up mirrors to our character, through the confronting patterns of our relationships. Welcome, to God's Dysfunctional Family.

David Bailey (Rev) – Rose City

Other Series Contributors: Peter Evans (Rev) – Stanthorpe, Nick Prins - Allora

Cultural Differences

Modern West	Ancient Near East
Ego-centric identity ("I")	Group-centric identity ("We")
Seek independence from others	Settled inter-dependence with others
Value Achievement	Value Relationships
See the parts	See the whole
Urge uniqueness	Urge conformity
Seek autonomy from groups	Seek integration into groups
Responsibility to self and fulfilling individual potential	Responsibility to others and helping the group
Group membership results from a renewable contract	Group membership results from one's inherited social and family place in society
Behaviour is governed by rights and duties specified by your own personal goals	Behaviour is dictated by the group's UGR's (unwritten ground rules) or the leader's authority
Individual worth varies by individual achievements, personal success and wealth	Individual worth is usually fixed in familial status, social position, class, or caste
Status is achieved	Status is received
Achieving and competing are motivational and normal	Achieving and competing are disruptive to the group
Assert your own rights	Submit personal rights to the group
Equality is a key value	Hierarchy is the key value
Friendships are functional and temporary	Friendships involve long-term loyalties or obligational commitments
Any group is viewed only as a collection of individuals	Any group is viewed as whole unit, inextricably interlocked
The self is separate from the physical world and other people	The self is organically connected with the physical world and other people
Any personal decision is made by the self alone, even if it is not in the group's best interests	Any personal decision is made in consultation with the group and often in obedience to its will
Private autonomy	Corporate solidarity
Strong personal identity	Strong family identity
Self-reliant achievement	Inter-dependent collaboration
Strong desire to be personally satisfied	Strong desire to be interpersonally satisfying

Adapted from John H Walton, 'The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis', Zondervan, 2001, pp.25-26.

Family Relationship Concepts

Relationship systems have a unique dimension. What most distinguishes relationship systems from other systems are emotional processes. These processes are driven by and organized around two forces: the need to be separate and the need to be close. We need to be separate (to be alone, to stand on our own two feet) and need to be close (to be together, to stand hand in hand). The two forces are in tension; they are anxiety producing. How can you stand alone and still embrace another? How can you be close to someone and not lose 'yourself'? How can you go in both directions? At times the tension is frightening.

How Your Church Family Works by Peter L Steinke p.10

1. "Angere"	<p>With anger and anguish, anxiety shares the same Latin root – <i>angere</i>. It is translated "to choke" or "to give pain by pushing together." Anxiety is emotional pain. It constricts and limits life. At the centre of its pain is uncertainty. Anxiety reduces clarity and objectivity. It interferes with our capacity to think creatively.</p> <p>Example: Abraham's anxiety (fear) of Pharaoh (Genesis 12). Esau's anger wanting to kill his brother (Genesis 27) Leah's anguish at not being loved (Genesis 29).</p>
2. Reacting vs Responding	<p>When we are anxious, we react before we think. Automatic processes take charge. Impulse overwhelms intention. Instinct sweeps aside imagination. Reactive behaviour closes off reflective thought. We doggedly defend our positions. Emotional reactivity limits clearly determined direction. But when we manage our own anxiety, we can respond after taking time to think and reflect.</p> <p>Example: Rachel and Leah's one-upmanship with having babies (Genesis 29-30).</p>
3. Triangulation	<p>Triangulation is a manipulation tactic where one person will not communicate directly about an issue with another person, instead using a third person to relay communication to the second, thus forming a triangle. This is a common way to manage anxiety in a relationship. When person A is at odds with person B, the most anxious of the pair introduces C (third party) to reduce anxiety between A and B. Although effective in the short time, triangulation shortcuts the healthy agony of facing our problems properly.</p> <p>Example: Sarah blaming Abraham for Hagar's attitude (Genesis 16).</p>
4. Enablement & Cutoff	<p><i>Enablement</i> occurs when a family member removes the natural consequences to the behaviour of another family member. It robs the other member of the opportunity to grow up.</p> <p><i>Cutoff</i> describes people managing their unresolved emotional issues with parents, siblings, and other family members by reducing or totally cutting off emotional contact with them. Both are examples of peacefaking.</p> <p>Example: Sarah is complicit in deceiving Abimelek (Genesis 20). Jacob running away (Genesis 27).</p>
5. Overfunctioning & Underfunctioning	<p><i>Overfunctioning</i> is when someone assumes more responsibility than is reasonably theirs, doing things for others that they should do for themselves. They are often rescuers, advice-givers, "have it together", detail oriented, organised and reliable, typically viewed as being reliable workers, partners, and parents. They feel responsible for others or know what is best for them.</p> <p><i>Underfunctioning</i> is when we assume less responsibility than is reasonably ours, getting others to help or do things that we really should do ourselves. They often act like victims, have problems maintaining progress on goals, and are under-employed.</p> <p>Underfunctioning 'victims' often pair with overfunctioning 'rescuers', feeding each other's need.</p>

	<p>Example: Isaac underfunctioning by not finding a wife for Esau (unlike Abraham who did for him, as fathers did in that culture - Genesis 28). Rebekah overfunctioning by organising Jacob to steal his brother's blessing (Genesis 27).</p>
6. Multigenerational Transmission & Sibling rivalry	<p><i>Multigenerational transmission</i> describes how patterns of behaviour are passed down from parents to following generations. We pick up in our childhood relational tools to manage our emotions and keep us 'safe'. However, these tools are not always healthy and often prove to be inadequate as adults and become obstacles to growing up as adults. Eg. lying as a child helped avoid punishment, but as an adult is a recipe for loneliness.</p> <p><i>Sibling rivalry</i> describes the ongoing conflict and tension between siblings raised in the same family.</p> <p>Example: Isaac and Rebekah repeat Abraham and Sarah's dysfunctional behaviour (Genesis 26). Sibling rivalry between Esau and Jacob, like Ishmael and Isaac, like Cain and Abel.</p>
7. Differentiation	<p>The healthy ability to stay connected in relationship to significant people yet not have our reactions and behaviour determined by them. This might also include: to steer you own course in the midst of difficult relationships, allowing Jesus to serve as our compass rather than reacting to everyone else's emotions, being a less-anxious presence in the midst of other's anxieties, taking responsibility for you own emotions (not expecting others to deal with them), knowing the difference between thinking and feeling.</p> <p>Example: Abraham at his best, negotiating well with Lot about who gets what land (Genesis 13).</p>
8. Fusion	<p>This is the opposite of differentiation. When we form an intense relationship with another and our actions depend largely on the condition of our relationship with that person at any given time. Decisions depend on what others think and whether the decision will disturb the fusion of that existing relationship. A fused person reacts rather than responds. Knowing where you end and the other person begins.</p> <p>Example: Jacob's immediate fusion with Rachel, and Rachel's fusion with the idea of a child: "Give me children or I die!" (Genesis 29-30)</p>
9. Reconciliation	<p>Action of restoring relationships, reconciling differences. The path to reconciliation is normally confession then repentance leading to forgiveness being asked for and given. Note that if someone isn't repentant, you can still forgive, but there is no reconciliation. Peacemaking, not peacefaking or peacebreaking.</p> <p>Example: Esau's reconciling behaviour when Jacob finally returns (Genesis 33), which reminds us of the Father in Jesus' story of the prodigal son in Luke 15.</p>
10. Apathy and Awareness	<p><i>Apathy</i> is a lack of passion, emotion or concern for our responsibilities. It's often an attempt to cope with anxiety by denying, suppressing or escaping our emotions.</p> <p><i>Awareness</i> is realising, perceiving and having insight, especially of appropriate responsibilities in our relationships.</p> <p>Example: Jacob's reaction to Dinah's defilement (Genesis 34).</p>

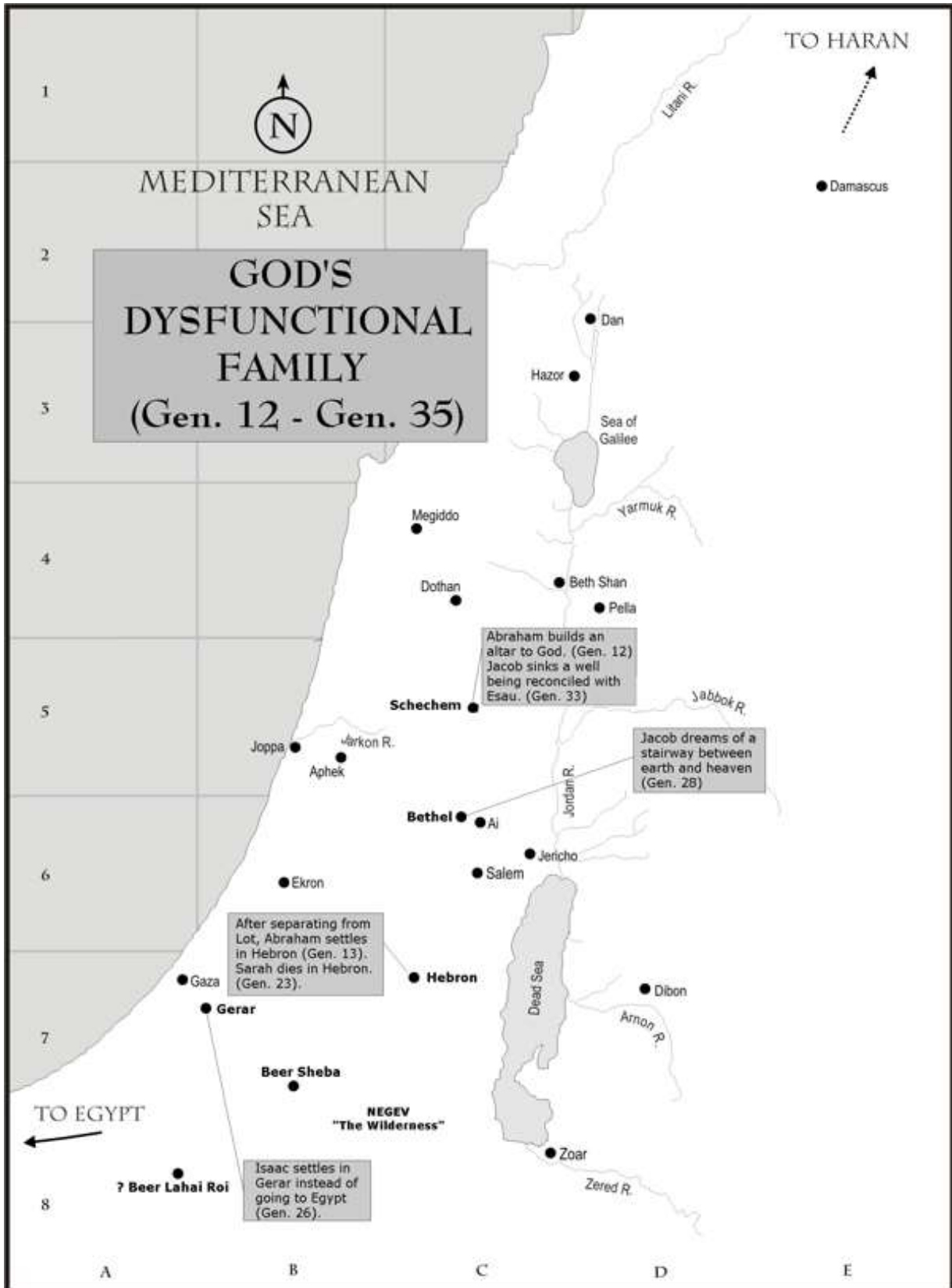
Differentiation Test

Put a mark on the line where you think you currently sit.

Undifferentiated	-----	Differentiated
quickly offended, easily provoked, too sensitive, slow to recover	-----	self-managing, shapes environment, resourceful
reactive, instinctive, automatic	-----	responsive, intentional, thoughtful
underhanded, covert, flourishes in the dark	-----	open, light-shedding, aware
demanding, willful, covert, stubborn, resistant (especially to reason and love), unbending	-----	resilient, has sense of proportion
think in black/white, yes/no, intolerant of ambiguity, seek final solution, want all or nothing	-----	have breadth of understanding, allow time for things to process
blame, criticize, displace, fault-finding, have poor discrimination	-----	take responsibility for self, learn when challenged, define self from within self
uptight, serious, defensive	-----	relaxed, at ease, sensible
competitive, either with or against, see life as a contest, contemptuous	-----	take turns, collaborate, stay in touch even when tension grows
vague, non-specific, cloaked	-----	clear objective, purposeful
create too much or too little space and one-sided solutions	-----	create space, options and common goals

Praise God for the areas where you've seen growth in your relational health. Have a look at the areas you could improve in. What practical steps might you take to address this? How could you include others in this growth?

Map



The Peacemaker's Pledge

The 4 Gs of Peacemaking



Glorify God

Instead of focusing on our own desires or dwelling on what others may do, we will rejoice in the Lord and bring him praise by depending on his forgiveness, wisdom, power, and love as we seek to faithfully obey his commands and maintain a loving, merciful, and forgiving attitude (Ps. 37:1-6; Mark 11:25; John 14:15; Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Cor. 12:31; Phil. 4:2-9; Col. 3:1-4; James 3:17-18; 4:1-3; 1 Peter 2:12).

Get the Log Out of Your Eye

Instead of blaming others for a conflict or resisting correction, we will trust in God's mercy and take responsibility for our own contribution to conflicts—confessing our sins to those we have wronged, asking God to help us change any attitudes and habits that lead to conflict, and seeking to repair any harm we have caused (Prov. 28:13; Matt. 7:3-5; Luke 19:8; Col. 3:5-14; 1 John 1:8-9).

Gently Restore

Instead of pretending that conflict doesn't exist or talking about others behind their backs, we will overlook minor offenses or we will talk personally and graciously with those whose offenses seem too serious to overlook, seeking to restore them rather than condemn them. When a conflict with a Christian brother or sister cannot be resolved in private, we will ask others in the body of Christ to help us settle the matter in a biblical manner (Prov. 19:11; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:29; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; James 5:9).

Go and Be Reconciled

Instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither, we will actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation—forgiving others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us, and seeking just and mutually beneficial solutions to our differences (Matt. 5:23-24; 6:12; 7:12; Eph. 4:1-3; 3:2; Phil. 2:3-4).

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know his infinite love (Matt. 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 4:19).

A Commitment to Biblical Conflict Resolution

As people reconciled to God by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe that we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict (Matt. 5:9; Luke 6:27-36; Gal. 5:19-26). We also believe that conflict provides opportunities to glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ (Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1; James 1:2-4). Therefore, in response to God's love and in reliance on his grace, we commit ourselves to responding to conflict according to the following principles.

By God's grace, we will apply these principles as a matter of stewardship, realizing that conflict is an opportunity, not an accident. We will remember that success in God's eyes is not a matter of specific results, but of faithful, dependent obedience. And we will pray that our service as peacemakers will bring praise to our Lord and lead others to know his infinite love (Matt. 25:14-21; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:18; 1 Peter 2:19; 4:19).

The Seven As of Confession

Matt. 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Prov. 28:13

ADDRESS everyone involved

AVOID if, but, and maybe

ADMIT specifically

ACKNOWLEDGE the hurt

ACCEPT the consequences

ALTER your behavior

ASK for forgiveness

The Four Promises of Forgiveness

Matt. 6:12; 1 Cor. 13:5; Eph. 4:32

I will not dwell on this incident.

I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.

I will not talk to others about this incident.

I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

The PAUSE Principle of Negotiating

Phil. 2:3-4; Matt. 7:12

Prepare

Affirm relationships

Understand interests

Search for creative solutions

Evaluate options objectively and reasonably

Building a Culture of Peace in Your Church

Acts 2:42-47; Phil. 1:27; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; Deut. 1:9-18

Passion for the gospel

Pastoral leadership

Peacemaking theology

Practical assistance

Our mission is to equip and assist Christians and their churches to respond to conflict biblically. In the real world, we provide educational resources, seminars, and training to help churches, seminaries, and parachurch ministries to transform the way their people deal with conflict. We also train and certify counselors to provide conflict coaching, mediation, and arbitration services to help resolve family conflicts, business disputes, church divisions, and lawsuits in a way that maintains relationships and brings glory to God.

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PEACEMAKER
MINISTRIES

P.O. Box 81130

Billings, MT 59108

406-256-1583 fax: 406-256-0001

mail@Peacemaker.net

www.Peacemaker.net

Peacemaking Principles



Responding to Conflict Biblically



PEACEMAKER
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www.Peacemaker.net

UNMET DESIRES AND THE SLIPPERY SLOPE OF CONFLICT

Harmful conflict is usually triggered by unmet desires. "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle with you? You want something but don't get it" (James 4:1-2). Even good desires can evolve into controlling demands or idols that lead us to judge others and later avoid or punish them until we get what we want (see Luke 11:38-47). This progression often starts with minor differences, but before we know it we're sliding down a slippery slope of conflict that can drop off in two directions.

1

Escape Responses

People tend to use escape responses when they are more interested in avoiding unpleasant people or situations than in resolving differences.

DENIAL—One way to escape from a conflict is to pretend that a problem does not exist. Another way is to refuse to do what should be done to resolve a conflict properly. These responses bring only temporary relief and usually make matters worse (see 1 Sam. 2:22-25).

FLIGHT—Another way to escape from a conflict is to run away. This may take the form of pulling away from a relationship, quitting a job, filing for divorce, or changing churches. Flight may be legitimate in extreme circumstances (see 1 Sam. 19:9-10), but in most cases it only postpones a proper solution to a problem.

SUICIDE—When people lose all hope of resolving a conflict, they may seek to escape from the situation (or make a desperate cry for help) by attempting to take their own lives (see 1 Sam. 31:4). Suicide is never a right way to deal with conflict.

Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict* by Ken Sande.

Peacemaking Responses

Peacemakers are people who breathe grace. Inspired by the gospel, they draw continually on the goodness and power of Jesus Christ, and then breathe out his love, mercy, forgiveness, and wisdom to dissipate anger, improve understanding, promote justice, and model repentance and reconciliation.

PERSONAL PEACEMAKING
There are three biblical ways to resolve conflicts personally and privately just between you and the other party.

OVERLOOK AN OFFENSE—Many disputes are so insignificant that they should be resolved by quietly overlooking an offense. "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense" (Prov. 19:11). Overlooking an offense is a form of forgiveness and involves a deliberate decision not to talk about it, dwell on it, or let it grow into pent-up bitterness or anger.

RECONCILIATION—If an offense is too serious to overlook or has damaged our relationship, we need to resolve personal or relational issues through a confession, loving correction, and forgiveness. "If your brother has something against you... go and be reconciled" (Matt. 5:23-24). "Both of us, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal. 6:1; see Matt. 18:15). "Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Col. 3:13).

NEGOTIATION—Even if we successfully resolve relational issues, we may still need to work through material issues related to money, property, or other rights. This should be done through a cooperative bargaining process in which you and the other person seek to reach a settlement that satisfies the legitimate needs of each's case. "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4).

5

ASSISTED PEACEMAKING

When a dispute cannot be resolved personally, God calls us to seek assistance from other believers.

MEDIATION—If two people cannot reach an agreement privately, they should ask one or more objective outside people to meet with them to help them communicate more effectively and explore possible solutions. "If he will not listen [to you], take one or two others along" (Matt. 18:16). The mediators may ask questions and give advice, but the parties retain the responsibility of making the final decision on how to resolve their differences.

ARBITRATION—When you and an opponent cannot come to a voluntary agreement on a material issue, you may appoint one or more arbitrators to listen to your arguments and render a binding decision to settle the issue. "If you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church" (1 Cor. 6:4).

ACCOUNTABILITY—If a person who professes to be a Christian waffles from the Lord by refusing to be reconciled and do what is right, Jesus commands church leaders to courageously intervene to hold him or her accountable to Scripture and to promote repentance, justice, and forgiveness. "If a man owns a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, will he not... go to look for the one that wandered off?... If he refuses to listen... (Matt. 18:12, 17).

THE GOSPEL—THE KEY TO PEACE

The key to changing the way we deal with conflict is the gospel, the good news that God has made peace with us and between us by sending his Son to die for our sins and give us new life through his resurrection (Col. 1:19-20). When we trust in Jesus Christ, God forgives all our sins and begins to transform our desires and character so that we can break free from the habit of escaping from conflict or attacking others (Ezek. 36:25-27). As Jesus' character grows in us, we can progressively maneuver peacemakers who delight in bringing glory to God by imitating his reconciling love (see Eze. 37:5-7; Col. 3:12-15).

4

Attack Responses

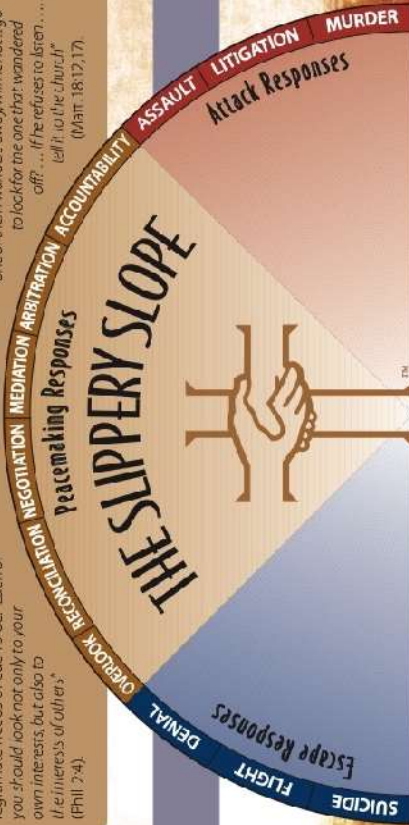
People tend to use attack responses when they are more interested in controlling others and getting their way than in preserving a relationship.

ASSAULT—Some people try to overcome an opponent by using various forms of force or intimidation, such as verbal attacks (including gossip and slander), physical violence, or efforts to damage a person financially or professionally (see Acts 6:8-15). Such conduct always makes conflict worse.

LITIGATION—Although some conflicts may legitimately be taken before a civil judge (see Acts 24:1-26:32; Rom. 13:1-5), lawsuits usually damage relationships, diminish our Christian witness, and often fail to achieve complete justice. This is why Christians are commended to make every effort to settle their differences within the church rather than in the civil courts (see 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Matt. 5:25-26).

MURDER—In extreme cases, people may be so desperate to win a dispute that they will try to kill those who oppose them (see Acts 7:54-58). While most people would not actually kill someone, we still share a guilty of murder in God's eyes when we harbor a "nag or contempt in our hearts toward others" (see 1 John 3:15; Matt. 5:21-22).

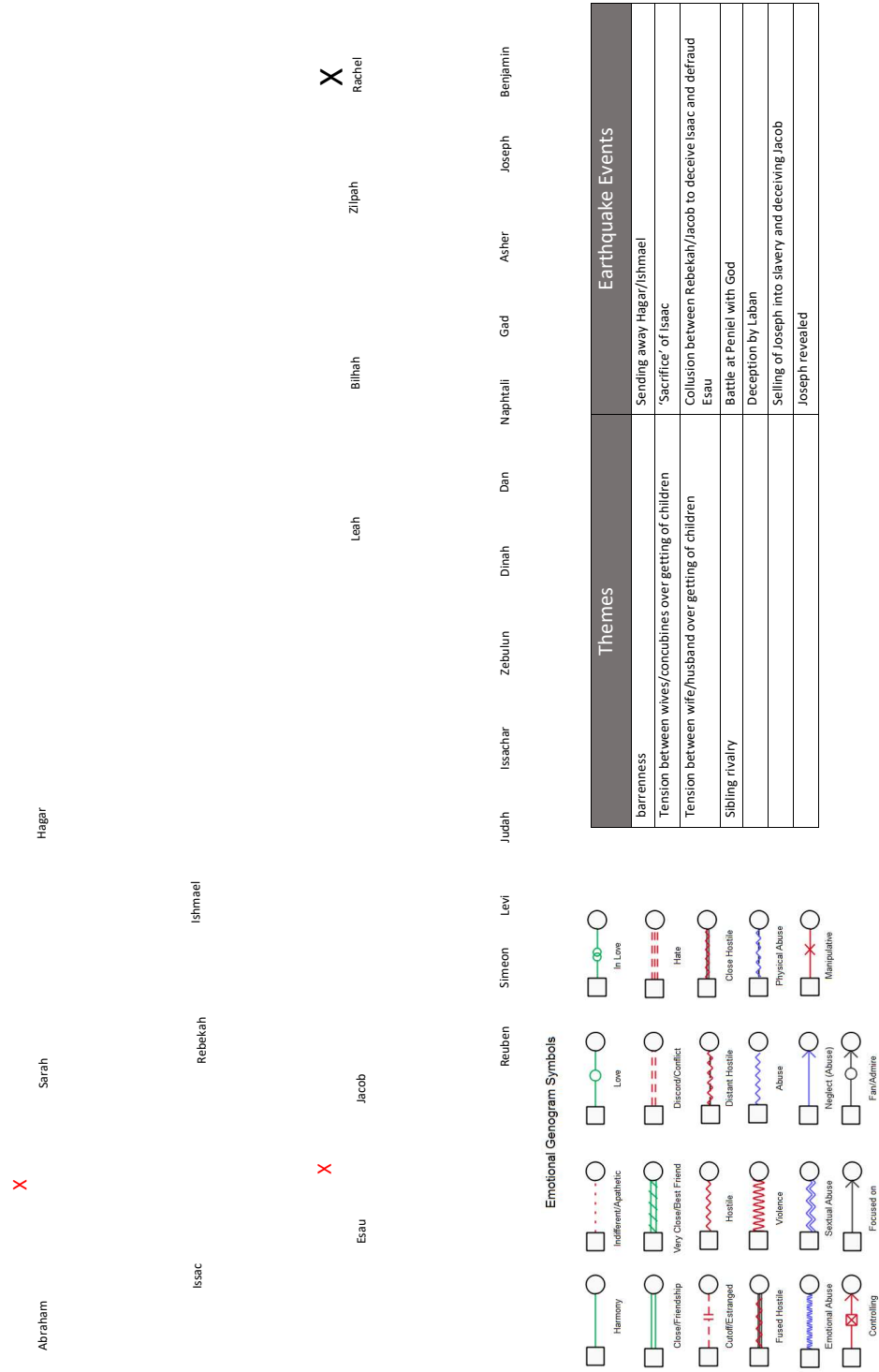
3



Patterns in Abraham's Family

(thanks to Rev David Thurston for sharing his work on this)

Discipline Exercise: Do a Genogram of Abraham's family to the third generation (Matthew 1:2).



Series Theme Songs

Your Name Is Matchless (Stanthorpe)

Verse 1

We were sinners we were orphans
We were looking for a home
We were lost and we were broken
Wandering alone
Looking down at our condition
You sent Your Son to change our fate
Though we were hopelessly imprisoned
He came to take our place

Chorus 1

Glory to the name of Jesus
Glory to the only name that saves
Ransomed the captives Your name is
matchless

Verse 2

What a mystery to fathom
That we're Your children set apart
For we were enemies not pilgrims
Prodigals at heart
But Your Spirit now has caused us
To no longer doubt Your love
Abba Father You have bought us
Adopted through Your Son

Chorus 2

Glory to the name of Jesus
Glory to the only name that saves
Ransomed the captives Your name is
matchless
Glory to the name that freed us
Glory to the love that made a way
Beauty for ashes Your name is
matchless

Bridge

Glory to Your name (3X)

Verse 3

Ponder all we have been given
Heirs to God through Jesus' name
A sting-less death has been made
certain
And glory now awaits Your glory now
awaits

CCLI Song # 7052978
Colin Edge | Neil DeGraide
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See the Man (Rose City)

Verse 1

See the man
Formed by the Father's hand
Dust turned to flesh
Filled with His breath
In the image of God
Loved and blessed
Given the very best
Destined to rule
Fill and subdue all of the earth
But death entered the day
He ate from the tree
Condemned all of mankind
To follow his lead
But one day a man will come
And undo what he had done
One day a Saviour will return

Verse 2

See the man
Leaving His father's land
Sent by the Lord
He journeys towards
A promised place
By his faith
Would come a nation great
In numbers surpassed
All of the stars
Shining in space
His name would be renowned
From the east to the west
And all people on earth
Through Him would be blessed
And one day a man will come
To finish what had begun
One day a Saviour would return

Verse 3

See the man
Come from His Father's side
His word become flesh
And all His fullness
Dwelling in Him
God's delight
Speaking the words of life
The Kingdom's revealed
The broken are healed
The blind given sight
And for all history's sin
The righteous is slain
By His blood death is defeated
He's risen again
And soon He will come again
And then forever reign
One day our Saviour will return

CCLI Song # 5403271
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From the first family, humanity fell into a vicious spiral of sin and suffering. But now through the call of Abram, God chooses a new family to carry His promises of blessing for the whole world.

Following Sunday

14 April

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 11:1-9, 27-32, Genesis 12

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

Chart man's downward spiral of sin and suffering since Genesis. What are some key events of Genesis 3-11 that show the hopelessness of the world?

In Genesis 11:27-12:3 How does the author slow down the story and focus on one man and his new family?

In Genesis 12 what obstacles arise to threaten the hope of verses 2 and 3?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

What has Abram done to deserve these promises of blessing in verses 2 and 3?

How does Abram honour the promises at this early stage in the story, and how does he respond out of fear and anxiety?

What have we learnt about Sarai that may help us understand her behaviour later on in the story?

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

Reflect on Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55. What lyrics remind us of God's promises to Abraham back in Genesis 12:2-3? In whom are they fulfilled?

Before you became a Christian, what did you fear, and what place did hope have in your life?

How have your fears and hopes changed since becoming a Christian?

6. Prayer

Praise God for his promises of hope to Abram, in a hopeless world of sin and suffering.

Ask for help as we follow the promises through the story of God's Dysfunctional Family.

Commit our desire to grow in healthy relationships as healthy disciples.



God's initiative is at the heart of His relationship with Abraham, who responds by believing God. So too with us, transforming families and blessing all of our relationships.

**Following Sunday
21 April**

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 13:1-14:4, Genesis 15

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

How does Abram respond to the conflict in chapter 13?

How is Abraham being declared 'righteous' in 15:6?

God promised Abram will be the father of a great nation (12:2). But in chapter 15, we see that he's childless (v1-6) and landless (v7-21). How does God reaffirm his covenant?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

When faced with a conflict, we often react by exerting power to get the outcome we want. How does Abram respond to the conflict in chapter 13 in a way that honours Lot and shows faith in God?

There are two negative ways and one positive way we can react to conflict. Read about Escape Responses (peacefaking) and Attack Responses (peacebreaking) in the Peacemaking Principles section of this book. Which side of the slope do you tend to slide down?

In the New Testament we learn that Jesus Christ is the supreme 'Word of God' (John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1). Have you 'believed him', and if so, what has been reckoned to you? (as we learnt from Romans 4 on Sunday)

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

Unhealthy reactions to conflict are often the result of us feeling the need to defend our self-righteousness. But the grace Jesus displays on the cross challenges us to pursue healthy relationships differently. How does faith in Jesus affect the way we should respond in conflict?

The Peacemaking Principles (p9&10) also talk about the range of Peacemaking responses we can choose. Read the six Peacemaking options in the brochure. Which one did Abram exercise in this passage?

6. Prayer

For courage to not avoid conflict in our lives.

That we would seek the best for those we are in conflict with, as Jesus did for us on the cross.

That gratitude for the undeserved gift of Christ's love would help us model grace in our relationships.



God Almighty reiterates His promises to Abraham and Sarah despite apparent circumstances and their dysfunctional impatience.

Following Sunday

28 April

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 16, Genesis 17:1-18:15

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

In chapter 16, Abram is finally given his first born son. How is this different from what we expected?

How are the promises about Ishmael (16:10-12) similar but different to those promises given to Abram (back in 12:1-3)? Which 'I will' promise are they most reflecting?

In 17:3-8 and 17:15-16 God reiterates his great promises to Abraham and Sarah. How are these promises similar but expanded on those given back in 12:1-3?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

This week we are learning about triangulation (see 'Family System Concepts p.6 &5). We form unhealthy triangles to try to shortcut pain. Where do we see triangulation in Sarah's life? Where is her suffering and sin?

Where in Abraham's?

Where in Hagar's?

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

In what relationships are you tempted to avoid dealing with difficult issues? Share with your group about which dysfunctional triangles you're most tempted to make.

6. Prayer

Reflect on the Lord's Supper in Luke 22. Praise God for the promises fulfilled in the New Covenant of King Jesus

Ask for God's help in triangulated relationships in your own life.

Commit to Almighty God one current situation where you feel helpless or hopeless, asking for help and hope to trust Him.



God sees to it that our repeated patterns of relational dysfunction are subverted by His enduring promises of grace, climaxing in the sacrifice and return of His only Son, whom He loves, on the third day.

Following Sunday
5 May

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 20:1-2, 21:1-21, Genesis 22:1-19

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

What are the similarities and differences between the Pharaoh experience of Abraham's deception and Abimelek's? (see chapter 12:10-20)

Consider all the laughing in chapter 17:7, 18:10-15 and 20:6-7. Why is there so much joy at the birth of Isaac? How do we feel on behalf of Abraham and Sarah at this point?

What is so sudden, striking and confronting about the turn of events in chapter 22? What phrases in this ancient chapter remind us of God's agonising sacrifice of his Son in the Gospels?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

Where do we see patterns of dysfunctional behaviour repeated by Abraham in these chapters?

Where do we see Sarah's poor patterns of behaviour at work again?

How do they enable each other (see 'Enablement' in Family Relationship Concepts p6&7)?

Now we're entering the second generation of God's Dysfunctional Family. As we follow the promises, how might parental behaviours play out in the generations of Ishmael and Isaac? What family habits have we learnt about and are now on the look out for?

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

Why do you think God so often smashes, subverts or gently undermines our expectations in life?

What relationships do you have, that if lost would stretch your love for God to the limit?

Have you ever experienced such stretching, and how did God 'see to it' that He provided for you?

6. Prayer

Praise God for the way he continues to advance his promises in our lives, by insisting on changing our sinful patterns of relational dysfunction (such as reacting out of anxiety, fear, triangles and enabling).

Thank God for sacrificing his only son, whom he loves, so that we too could become part of his family.

Pray that we will keep learning to trust God in all circumstances, no matter how much they appear not to make sense at the time.



God provides Isaac with a wife (Rebekah), encouraging us to trust Him to provide for His people and keep His promises.

**Following Sunday
12 May**

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 23:1-2, 24:1-33, Genesis 24:32-25:11

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

The situation at the start of chapter 23 is that Sarah has died (23:1-2), Abraham's old and Isaac is single. Why is this such a problem?

In chapter 24, Abraham sends his senior servant out to find a wife for Isaac from his own people. The servant prays in 24:12-14, setting unlikely conditions for him to be sure the woman he finds is God's choice. This is similar to 'laying out the fleece' (Judges 6:36-40). Why is this way of seeking God's guidance not something we should practice today?

Rebekah really shines in this chapter while Isaac is far less heroic. She's active while he's passive. What's the significance of Rebekah and how is she such a blessing?

In 25:1-11, Abraham remarries and has more children, then dies. While Abraham leaves everything to Isaac (25:5), how do we see "the nations being blessed" in 25:6?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

Read about 'underfunctioning/overfunctioning' in Family Relationships Concepts (p.6&7). What underfunctioning and/or overfunctioning can you identify in this episode?

Overfunctioners are often 'rescuers' who do things for others that they should do themselves. As a result, they often find themselves surrounded by emotionally immature people who have been constantly rescued, avoiding the agony of growing up. Where can you identify under/overfunctioning in your own life?

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

Groups of people exert influence over how the individuals in that group think, feel and act. This 'groupthink' or peer pressure can be positive or negative, unconscious or deliberate. We vary in our susceptibility to conform. Our susceptibility depends on how 'differentiated' we are (see Family Relationships Concepts p 6&7). How would you describe your own level of differentiation? High or low?

How does defining our 'selves' in Jesus have a huge influence in our level of differentiation?

6. Prayer

Give thanks that God promises includes 'secondary', unlikely and unworthy Gentiles like us in his family.

Ask the Spirit for discernment and comfort as we see and mourn the brokenness in our own families.

Ask for courage to find our value and worth more fully in Jesus, so we can be more differentiated and able to heal relationships in our church and wider family.



Plagued with intergenerational sin and suffering, Isaac and Rebekah are blessed by God with twins. One will be a despiser and the other a deceiver, but God shows His determination to use this dysfunctional family to bless all the nations of the earth.

**Following Sunday
19 May**

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 25:19-34, Genesis 26

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah, but 60 when they finally have twins. In 25:19-26 we learn that Rebekah's experience is similar to Sarah's: both childless and both waiting 20-25 years to conceive. Yet the wait for Sarah's first child was explored over 9 chapters (12-21) whilst Rebekah's is covered in a single verse (25:21). Why do you think the author summarises Rebekah's similar experience in this way? What mistakes had Sarah made that Rebekah seems to have learnt from?

In 25:27-34 we learn that the twins are named Esau and Jacob, with one grasping the heel of the other at birth - a sign of things to come. Who do they each remind us of, and why?

In chapter 26 Isaac and Rebekah repeat the same dysfunctional behaviour (with Abimelek) that Abraham and Sarah engaged in twice (chapters 12 and 20). Yet chapter 6 also shows how Isaac's faith in God has grown to become like Abraham's, and how God reaffirms His promises to Isaac. How does this 'wife as sister' act play out differently different to the previous two?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

Where in this episode do we see multi-generational dysfunction in Esau?

In Jacob?

In Isaac and Rebekah?

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

Reflect on your sibling position as a child. How has parental favouritism, sibling rivalry and intergenerational patterns of behaviour affected your identity (see Family Relationships Concepts on p6&7)? Share with your group to the extent you feel comfortable.

Esau despises his family heritage. Jacob steals it. How well (or otherwise) do you think you carry the legacy and heritage of your own family of origin? What patterns do you repeat?

We often act foolishly, hastily and impulsively in our relationships (like Esau) when we are Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired (H.A.L.T.) How have you noticed this in your own relationships? What new habits can you honour God and others with?

6. Prayer

Praise God for the hope in Jesus' story of two other lost sons (Luke 15).

Give thanks for God's patience with wayward sons and daughters like us who are 'slow to learn and swift to burn'.

Ask God to help us help each other to break our patterns of intergenerational sin and sibling rivalry.



God can use even human deception to accomplish His redemptive plan.

**Following Sunday
26 May**

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 27, Genesis 28:1-9

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

The main concern in this passage is the blessing. We saw last week that Esau hastily gave away his birthright blessing. What is the blessing on offer here and why is it so important?

What do we learn about Isaac's character in chapter 27?

Chapter 27 is an incredible story of lies and deception. How can we reconcile this being a part of God's plan to see his promise to Abraham fulfilled? How does Esau try to win his father's approval in 28:1-9?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

Make a list of the dysfunctional behaviours in this chapter (use Family Relationships Concepts p6&7).

How would you describe the state of Isaac and Rebekah's marriage? Where were the seeds of their dysfunction planted?

There is a great need for men to be affirmed by other men in their transition into manhood. How was Esau affected by losing the blessing of his father? How was Jacob affected by the cunning of his mother? Reflect on the role of parents in 'defining' self.

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

The sad state of Isaac and Rebekah's marriage is a great opportunity for all of us, married or single, to think about our levels of differentiation. What have you been learning about yourself in this series so far?

In Genesis 3:12, Adam tries to make Eve take the fall for his sin. In 27:13 Rebekah promises to take the fall but in 27:41-43, she doesn't! Instead of peacemaking (confessing and repenting of her deception) she allows Jacob to take the fall.

It's tragic when we miss key opportunities to grow up. Where is there a conflict, broken relationship or sin in your life that could be an 'agonising' opportunity for you to grow up?

6. Prayer

Pray for courage to acknowledge and face up to the bad behaviours in your own life.

Seek to trust God as you step out of your comfort zone, define self and seek healthy relationships.

Give thanks that when we misbehave, God gives us opportunities to better define ourselves in Christ, humbly facing our brokenness and embracing the agony of growing up.

Praise God that he can even use human deception to accomplish his redemptive plan.



*God advances
His promises
despite the
multitude of
obstacles Jacob
and his family
create and
experience.*

**Following Sunday
2 June**

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 28:10-29:18. Genesis 29:16-30:24

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

In chapter 28, what does Jacob's reaction to God's unconditional promises at Bethel show about his relationship with God? How is he 'tricky' in his reaction and what does he need to learn?

Ironically, Jacob becomes the victim of deception. How and what is his reaction?

Who is playing favourites in this episode? How does this show up?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

The name Jacob can mean 'deceiver'. In what ways can we deceive ourselves? Others?

How do we react when we find out we've been deceived? How do others react towards us when they find out we've deceived them?

Discuss the Family Relationships Concept of 'fusion' on p7. In what areas of our lives can we play favourites?

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

What is preventing honesty and openness in your current relationships with others?

What can we do to grow out of our tendency to play favourites?

In chapter 30, we can see the idolatry of children. In John 15, what does Jesus explain about true fruitfulness?

6. Prayer

Pray for God to open our eyes to where we deceive others and for courage to be open and honest instead.

Pray that we will treat everyone with the grace and love that we have received from Jesus.

Thank God that the Holy Spirit enables us to change and become more Christlike in our relationships with others.



God loves Jacob where he is, but loves Jacob too much to leave him there. To finally return to the land of promise, Jacob must face his past with Esau, come face to face with God, and ultimately face up to who God is changing him to be.

Following Sunday

16 June

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 32, Genesis 33

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

God now has Jacob finally facing up to unresolved issues in this life, 20 years since he fled. Identify all of the 'seeing' and 'facing' and 'eyes' language in this passage.

Jacob now has no choice, despite his fear, but to face Esau – the brother he cheated time and again. In chapter 32, how is Jacob still being cunning, true to his 'tricky' name?

These two chapters are all about the wrestle with Jacob, but especially the wrestle within Jacob. How does this agonising wrestle change Jacob, and how does 33:20 show how much he has changed?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

By chapter 32, Jacob has no choice, despite his fear, but to face Esau – the brother he cheated time and again. How is Jacob still being cunning, true to his 'tricky' name, in 32:3-21?

Since being in the womb, Jacob has always been a 'grasper', grasping for things he shouldn't (see 25:26). He reminds us of Adam's 'grasping' for forbidden fruit (back in Genesis 3) and King David's 'grasping' for Bathsheba up ahead (2 Samuel 11). 20 years since he last grasped at Esau's blessings, what must Jacob now 'let go of' in chapter 33, to seek reconciliation with his brother?

With Laban in the last episode, Jacob thought he was being stretched to his limits. But now it's time for Jacob to be stretched beyond his limits – and by God himself! How does this remind us of Abram back in chapter 15, and how he was stretched to the limit? What must Jacob learn about his lifelong and intergenerational family habit of relying on his own cunning and resources?

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

Human families are not just places of agony but can also be the ideal places for personal healing, character change, relational growth and family flourishing, especially through reconciliation. What does Esau 'let go of' to seek reconciliation with Jacob?

What do they both do with their material blessings in this episode?

Look at the way Esau's behaviour is described in 33:1-11. Look at Jacob's. What parallels are there with Jesus' story of the two lost sons in Luke 15?

6. Prayer

Praise God that while he loves us where we are, he loves us too much to leave us there.

Prayer for courage to face the sins of our past, wrestle with the agony of growing up and experience the Father's forgiveness and grace.

Give thanks and pray for our families as places of growth and healing.



The agony of defilement and death jolts Jacob out of apathy to continue his wrestle to finally and fully believe in His God.

**Following Sunday
23 June**

1. Reflect on the Service

Where in the Sunday service were you able to see God at work (this could be in the sermon, Bible reading, songs, prayer or a conversation)? What is one experience where you were made aware of God's presence?

2. Read

Genesis 34, Genesis 35

What stood out to you?

3. Drilling Down

In chapter 34, the Shechemites make an offer that the Israelites mix and intermarry in order to unite both communities and be one stronger nation. What problem are they trying to fix?

What was at risk if Jacob accepted this offer?

How is religion used in the most awful way by Jacob's sons in 34:13-31?

The events of chapter 34 leave the Israelites very vulnerable. How might these awful events have actually contributed positively to the Israelites returning to Bethel and being restored by God (v11-12)?

4. The Dysfunction (sin and suffering)

The defilement of Dinah and the slaughter that follows are a result of Jacob's apathy in Shechem. While Jacob has often been cunning like his mum Rebekah, here he is underfunctioning like his dad Isaac. In what ways do we fail to deal with sin properly in our church community?

The sons use religion (circumcision) as a cover to exact their revenge. How might we be tempted to cunningly use religion as a cloak to promote our own interests?

5. Healthy Relationships (agony and growing)

Jacob's apathy has allowed some awful things to happen to his family (see Family Relationships Concepts p7). His unwillingness to address dysfunctional relationships hasn't kept the peace but resulted instead in more heartache. How has this series helped you grow up to face painful relationships in your life?

In 35:1 God tells Jacob to return to Bethel, his spiritual roots, and build an altar. The altar is a place of worship and confession that leads to repentance and reconciliation. This is the pathway to pursuing healthy relationships in our church and wider families: begin with worship, confess and repent of our sin, then go and ask forgiveness so we can be reconciled. How does the cross now reshape relationships in the church?

Reflecting on this series, how has God grown your awareness? We continue to be God's dysfunctional family, but we're on a journey towards heaven. God uses the sin our lives to refine us into grow us of. Share one or two reflections about this series that have helped you better define yourself in Christ (differentiate) and to grow up in your relationships with others.

6. Prayer

Ask for wisdom and courage to not avoid painful relationships in our lives but face them with the conviction that God loves us.

Praise our Father God for working in us by his Spirit, calling us out of our apathy and into awareness of who He is and who He wants us to become.

Pray that we would not waste the crises in our lives but instead embrace the agony of growing up in Jesus according to God's promises of blessing to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

