

JANUARY 2013

25th

Anniversary

1988

2013

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

I am God
Almighty;
walk before
me faithfully
and be
blameless.

Genesis 17:1



Characters and Themes in Genesis:
God's Actions, Man's Choices



FOUNDER'S WEEK • FEBRUARY 4–8

KNOWING CHRIST

“I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value
of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” Philippians 3:8

MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE'S FOUNDER'S WEEK 2013

This conference, held annually in Chicago since 1901, features an outstanding lineup of prominent Christian teachers, speakers, and musicians offering life-transforming Bible teaching and worship. Free and open to the public, this year's conference takes place on February 4–8 and will focus on the inspiring theme of “Knowing Christ.”

ONLINE AND ON THE AIR!

If you can't join us in person, we invite you to watch conference sessions live online at www.foundersweek.org or listen on your local Moody Radio station. To see a list of Moody Radio stations, visit www.foundersweek.org. If you miss a session or want to watch or hear it again later, audio and video conference sessions will be available online after the conference ends.

BIBLICAL MESSAGES AND UPLIFTING WORSHIP

Grow in your knowledge and love for Jesus Christ as you learn from some of the best Christian leaders and expository Bible preachers in America. Be energized and inspired to live more fully for the Savior.



D. A. Carson
Professor
Trinity Evangelical
Divinity School
Deerfield, IL



Tony Evans
Senior Pastor
Oak Cliff
Bible Fellowship
Dallas, TX



James Ford
Senior Pastor
Christ Bible Church
of Chicago
Chicago, IL



Mark Jobe
Lead Pastor
New Life
Community Church
Chicago, IL



Raju Kunjummen
Associate Professor
Moody Theological
Seminary
Plymouth, MI



Erwin Lutzer
Senior Pastor
The Moody Church
Chicago, IL



John MacArthur
Pastor-Teacher
Grace Community
Church
Sun Valley, CA



James MacDonald
Senior Pastor
Harvest Bible Chapel
Rolling Meadows, IL



Eric Mason
Lead Pastor
Epiphany Fellowship
Philadelphia, PA



Al Mohler
President
The Southern Baptist
Theological Seminary
Louisville, KY



Laurie Norris
Special Instructor
Moody Bible Institute
Chicago, IL



Paul Nyquist
President
Moody Bible Institute
Chicago, IL



Janet Parshall
Radio Host
and Author
Moody Radio
Chicago, IL



Gerald Peterman
Chair of
Bible Department
Moody Bible Institute
Chicago, IL



David Platt
Senior Pastor
The Church at Brook Hills
Birmingham, AL



Philip Ryken
President
Wheaton College
Wheaton, IL



Tim Stafford
Pastor of Music Ministries
The Moody Church
Chicago, IL

Join in worship led by Meredith Andrews, Shane & Shane, Charles and Donna Butler, and two student music leaders in our morning sessions. Moody's music ensembles will also perform.

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Principles from Haran



Not too many people end up at the altar with the wrong bride, but Jacob did. At first glance, the story of Jacob mistakenly marrying Leah appears to be nothing more than a narrative

about an infuriating father-in-law, but this story is about much more. It is a demonstration of God's commitment to refining and molding the life of a child that belongs to Him.

After Jacob deceived his father and stole the blessing from his brother, he fled east to his uncle Laban in Haran. On the first night of his journey, God appeared to Jacob in a dream and promised him, "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go" (Gen. 28:15).

This was Jacob's first real encounter with God. The two scenes that follow reveal two very important principles about how God works in the lives of His children. The first of these principles is good news for you and me; the second is sobering.

When Jacob arrived in Haran, he just happened to come to a well where the shepherds knew Laban, and he just happened to arrive when one of Laban's daughters, Rachel, came to the well. God orchestrated this. God brought Jacob to the very place where he needed to be. You see, when God is at work in your life, He can make your path smooth.

This is not the only way God works in our lives, however. He also refines us and disciplines us. This is the sobering principle we observe in scene two of this story.

In return for Rachel's hand in marriage, Jacob agreed to serve Laban for seven years. At the end of seven years, Jacob went to Laban and requested his bride (Gen. 29:21). Laban agreed—but he disguised his older daughter, Leah, under the wedding veil instead of Rachel. When Jacob woke the morning after his wedding, he realized he had unknowingly married the wrong daughter. In this ironic reversal of roles, Jacob, the deceiver, became the deceived.

Why did God allow this to happen? Hadn't God promised to watch over Jacob? We must understand that God works in the lives of His children in more than one way. He is at work in the lives of His children to smooth their paths, like He did in bringing Jacob to Haran, but He is also at work in the lives of His children to discipline them, to perfect them.

God used Laban to scrape away the rough edges in Jacob's life. We all need Labans in our lives because we all have rough edges. God often brings difficult people and difficult circumstances into our lives to mold us and discipline us. God does this because He loves us, and He is committed to working in our lives. Sometimes He makes our path smooth, and sometimes He refines us. But thanks be to God, He is always working in our lives.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



Abraham's Faith and Ours

Abraham is one of the central figures in the book of Genesis. He was the patriarch from whom all Israel traced its descent (Ps. 105:6; Isa. 41:8). When the Lord called Abraham to leave his native land in Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan, He promised to make him a great nation and to make him a blessing to all the people on the earth (Gen. 12:1–3). Later the Lord reiterated His promise, declaring that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven. Because Abraham believed God's promise, his faith was credited as righteousness (Gen. 15:4–6).

Because of this exercise of faith, Abraham should also be regarded as one of the forefathers of the church. In Romans 4:10, the apostle Paul points out that Abraham was declared righteous through faith prior to being circumcised. In Abraham's case, circumcision served as the sign and seal of a righteousness that he already possessed as a gift from God. In this way Abraham became "the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them" (Rom. 4:11). He is also "the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that

our father Abraham had before he was circumcised" (Rom. 4:12).

In other words, Abraham's example demonstrates that righteousness cannot be earned as a result of human effort. It is something that God credits to our account when we believe His promise. This righteousness comes to us through Jesus Christ, who is the promised descendant (literally, "seed") through whom all the nations of the earth can be blessed (cf. Gal. 3:16). Those who place their faith in Christ are credited as righteous just as Abraham was. The priority of faith is important because it guarantees that this blessing of righteousness is the result of grace and not of any human effort (Rom. 4:16). Because righteousness is a matter of grace, those who have the same kind of faith as Abraham can be certain that their sins have been forgiven (1 John 2:12).

No religious ritual can substitute for faith in Jesus Christ. The point Paul makes about circumcision also holds true for baptism. Baptism is a divinely appointed sign, but if we are depending upon anything apart from Christ for eternal life, this "faith means nothing and the promise is worthless" (Rom. 4:14).

For Further Study

To learn more about Abraham, read *Created to Be God's Friend: Lessons from the Life of Abraham* by Henry Blackaby (Thomas Nelson).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Maffei

The Everyday Walk



I've always liked the hymn "In the Garden." The author, C. Austin Miles, wrote this beautiful hymn in 1912 after an astonishing spiritual experience. According to his account, he had read his favorite Bible chapter—John 20—and it seemed to him he became part of the narrative. It was as if he saw a vision and became a silent witness of the scene near the empty tomb in the garden when Mary Magdalene saw the resurrected Christ and heard Him say, "Mary!" Under the inspiration of this vision he wrote the poem as quickly as the words came to him, and later the same day he wrote the music.

There's simplicity and intimacy in the hymn's description of a believer hearing the voice of God's Son. The refrain poignantly conveys that "personal relationship with Christ" we all long for:

*"And He walks with me, and He talks
with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known."*

The same risen Christ speaks to us today, but we need to be in the Word to hear Him. We hope that *Today in the Word* helps you enter into that quiet "garden time" with the risen Christ. We view our devotional as a

tool for a deeper study of the Bible for our readers, when you can come closer to Christ, see Him more clearly, and hear Him say your name.

The letters and e-mails from our readers this year showed us that *Today in the Word* has been helpful to you in your walk with Christ. Robert and Pam from Clearwater, Florida, wrote: "We are very thankful to have the privilege of beginning our day with *Today in the Word*. It has revealed to us many times the sovereignty of God. It is always timely for encouragement and guidance in various circumstances of work, relationships, travel, and ministry." Another reader, David, noted in his e-mail: "I want you to know that [*Today in the Word*] has been a blessing. Each morning the Lord has something for me that seems to fit right in with what I need in my life. The teaching of the different topics has ministered to me, and God bless those who are writing the content of each issue. I feel that God is using this material to help me grow closer to Him." And Lisa said over the phone: "*Today in the Word* is such a blessing to me. It helps me with my Bible study so much." Thank you to all our readers for your prayers, financial support, as well your letters, e-mails, and phone calls. We're looking forward to your feedback in 2013.

As we start the New Year, let's diligently study the Word of God. Let us go to the garden to walk with Christ. We need to learn how to see and hear Him more clearly. Because in Him, and Him only, our hearts can find rest and home.

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 1

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Paul B. Currie

MANAGING EDITOR
Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Elena Maffer

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
John Koessler
Kim Pickett

WRITER
David Mathwin

1-800-DL MOODY
(356-6639)
www.moodyministries.net



PRESIDENT
J. Paul Nyquist

PROVOST
Junias Venugopal

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
AND CHIEF OPERATING
OFFICER
Steven Mogck

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
Greg R. Thornton

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
Ken Heulitt

VICE PRESIDENTS
Elizabeth Brown
Larry Davidhizar
Lloyd R. Dodson
Jim Elliott
Christine Gorz
John A. Jelinek
Collin G. Lambert
Frank W. Leber Jr.
Thomas A. Shaw
James Spencer

TRUSTEE CHAIRMAN
Jerry B. Jenkins

TRUSTEES
Christopher Denison
T. Randall Fairfax
Thomas S. Fortson
J. Paul Nyquist
Bervin C. Peterson
David Schipper
Paul Von Tobel
Mark Wagner
Richard E. Warren
Richard Yook

TRUSTEE EMERITUS
Paul Johnson

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Characters and Themes in Genesis: God's Actions, Man's Choices

One of the most intriguing—and the most human—questions in all the Bible is in the Book of Job: “Where is God my Maker?” (Job 35:10). Many of us have asked this question in the moments of hardship, uncertainty, and fear. The answer is found, as it should be, “in the beginning,” the Hebrew name for the book of Genesis. In Greek, *Genesis* means “origin.” This book of the Bible reveals the origin of all human history, as well as the beginning of communion between God and man.

Genesis also tells us real life stories of real people. This month, as we study what happened “in the beginning,” we’ll see how God first made Himself known to the characters of human drama, how He talked and walked with them, and how He took them into His covenant. Abraham and Lot, Isaac and Rebekah, Sarah and Hagar—these and many other participants of “the beginning” story will speak to us from the dawn of history, and we’ll learn more about the God who worked through their trials, triumphs, and tragedies.

The same God makes Himself known to us. He gives us a glimpse of Him by faith, and He talks to us today by His Spirit and by His Word. It’s a privilege for all of us at *Today in the Word* to study God’s Word with our readers in a community of faith. Thank you to all our faithful supporters for making it possible!

Moody Bible Institute is the sole publisher of *Today in the Word*, copyright © 2013 by Moody Bible Institute. All rights reserved. Please direct all *Today in the Word* inquiries to Donor Resource Management, 820 N. LaSalle Blvd., Chicago, IL 60610. Scripture taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture taken from the *New American Standard Bible*®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Printed in the U.S.A. *Today in the Word* is published monthly. Printed on 30% recycled paper.

Adam and Eve: A Match Made in Heaven

Every civilization has a story about how humanity appeared on earth. This story matters, because people understand their own meaning and purpose from how they think human life began. Some cultures have worshiped creation itself; others think human life is nothing more than chemical compounds. God's Word says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1), and this provides the foundation for how we view the world and ourselves.

This month in *Today in the Word* we'll look at characters in Genesis and hope to gain greater insight into how we should live in the world today.

We must be struck first of all with God's majesty revealed through His creative power. Many ancient mythologies describe the world arising through conflict between many gods. Here we see one God who speaks, and worlds take form. God's word subdues all darkness and

emptiness (v. 2). He conquers all, and the orderly procession of creation from light to land, from plants to people testifies to His majesty and power.

In addition to His majesty God shows His love, as He prepared this procession not only for Himself but also for Adam and Eve. God cares for creation in general, but made His relationship with humanity special (1:27).

This opening chapter shows us that in sharing in God's image, Adam and Eve were meant for a creative and vibrant union, one that helped make creation "very good." Only as male and female together can humanity reflect Trinitarian reality, both in their union ("God created man") and in their distinctiveness ("male and female he created them"). As God rested, so could Adam and Eve. Harmony reigned as humanity formed the bridge between God and creation.

God created
mankind in his
own image.

Genesis 1:27

Apply the Word

We can never understand our true purpose on earth without seeing first God's goodness in making a world for His children. As we begin a new year, ask the Lord to give you fresh eyes to see His goodness and your purpose in this world. The Lord who created you also delights in your life!

Pray with Us

Please pray for Donor Communications: Paul Currie, Kim Pickett, and Joe Forrider. This team communicates with Moody's prayer and financial partners throughout the year, encouraging them with all that God is doing through their support of Moody's ministries.

Adam and Eve: The Meaning of Marriage

The United States has one of the highest divorce rates in the world, yet this has done little to dispel our love for weddings. Millions tuned in to watch the royal wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton, and numerous reality television shows feature brides or wedding planners.

The real reason we love weddings goes to the roots of Creation itself: God Himself established marriage at the beginning. Genesis 1 continues a cascade of declarations, “and it was good,”

but now that chorus screeches to a halt when God says, “It is *not* good [emphasis added] for the man to be alone” (2:18). Creation stands incomplete, as none of the animals fulfill either Adam’s or God’s purpose (v. 20). Genesis 1 gives us clues as to why.

God made all things, but made only mankind specifically “in his own image”

This is now bone
of my bones and
flesh of my flesh.

Genesis 2:23

(1:27). Bearing His image has many implications for us, but one is that we are to be creative as He creates and bring forth life. God wanted to share something of His creative power with humanity, and so Adam needed a physical complement. Scripture proclaims that the male-female sexual union within marriage alone helps mankind bear God’s image.

Genesis 1 also hints at the plurality in the God-head in verse 26, “Let us make mankind in our image” (cf. John 1:1–3). Adam by himself cannot fully bear God’s image to creation. Adam and Eve become one as God Himself is one (Deut. 6:4), but just as the Father is not the Son, so too Adam and Eve have distinction and worth as individuals apart from their unity. Their marriage partnership hints at the reality of the Trinity, and the relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:32).

Apply the Word

If the church wants to bear God’s image to the world, it can do few better things than strengthen its marriages. Today perform one act of kindness for your spouse as an intentional act of worshiping the Lord. If you’re single, your purity of life honors marriage and proclaims the same truth. May we value marriage as much as we enjoy weddings.

Pray with Us

As we begin this new year, Jim Elliott, vice president of Stewardship, requests your prayers for a strong start to 2013. Please ask God to move in the hearts of His people to support Moody’s education and media ministries.

Adam and Eve: Fences Create Freedom

A story is told about a composer who had a troublesome son. They often quarreled, but the son had a trump card. When his father went to sleep, he played the first seven notes of a scale, leaving it incomplete. Ever the perfectionist, the father would be unable to sleep until he climbed out of bed and played the final note on the piano.

Genesis 1:1 through 2:17 progresses like a perfect symphony. Creation unfurls in perfect order and harmony, and is all “good.” Suddenly in 2:18 something is “not good,” and God completes creation by creating woman. We discussed yesterday how marriage reflects the Trinitarian nature of God in the plurality of persons. The male/female partnership reflects the diversity in creation, and the instructions to leave father and mother again shows how each marriage represents something new in creation.

For Adam no suitable helper was found.

Genesis 2:20

Marriage also reflects the essential unity of the Trinity and creation, and that is the emphasis in verse 24. The mystery of marriage is akin to the mystery of the Trinity. Just as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit maintain their individual personhood yet are in the unity, so too man and woman in marriage stay themselves and become something else at the same time.

God makes this “new creation” from the “one flesh” union of marriage. This goes beyond sexual union, but certainly includes it. In fact, many commentators state that biblical language asserts that the physical union creates the marriage itself. In their union, Man and Woman experienced perfect freedom with one another (v. 25). The joy God takes in creation was intended to spill over into the joy Adam and Eve can share with each other. The marriage relationship has great value and purpose in reflecting God’s creativity, unity, and joy.

Apply the Word

With proper boundaries, children are more secure and can truly enjoy their surroundings. We need to see God’s restrictions on our sexual behavior in the same way, as gateways not to slavery but to greater freedom. Today let us thank God for His guidance, for “The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul” (Ps. 19:7).

Pray with Us

Today our prayers go to God for Planned Giving: Crystal Davis-Landrum, Eric Beckman, Emily Ferguson, Mary Lou Fritz, and Stephen Kott. Will you ask the Lord to use this team to minister to the many friends of Moody they speak with over the phone each day?

Isaac and Rebekah: Tell Good Stories

Parents often spend a great deal of time worrying about the person their child will marry. Concerns about compatible personalities have their place. But faithful parents will desire most of all that their child will marry a godly Christian.

Abraham faced the same issue, only his son had fewer options. As a sojourner he had no godly community of faith surrounding him, no “nice girls” for Isaac to meet. He wanted Isaac to marry within Abraham’s extended family, and wanted

to prevent Isaac from having to leave Canaan. It was “this land” (v. 7) that God promised his descendants. Instead, Abraham sent his most trusted servant (vv. 2–3).

Though Abraham has cause for concern, he did not fall prey to manipulating circumstances as he had done in Egypt and with Abimelek (see Genesis 12 and 20). His servant need not resort to tricks or

lies to force the issue. Abraham had hope, but would not put God to the test (vv. 7–8).

Chapter 24 is the longest in Genesis, largely because the reader both sees the story happen and then hears it recounted to Rebekah’s family (vv. 35–48). This narrative oddity should clue us in to the importance of this story.

As God poured forth His blessings in creation, He intended Abraham as a funnel of those blessings

for all people (12:3). Marriage is a particular way that God uses to bring forth life and blessing (2:18–25), and Isaac’s marriage ensures that God’s blessings will continue to all humanity. Though marriage is the main event, God’s hand is all over the text. He blessed Abraham (v. 1), sent angels (v. 7), and gave signs (v. 13). Our response should be that of the servant who “bowed down and worshiped the LORD” (v. 26).

He will send his
angel before you
so that you can
get a wife for my
son from there.

Genesis 24:7

Apply the Word

Every couple has a story, and many marriage seminars emphasize the importance of husbands and wives recalling and telling their story to themselves and their children. Recognizing God’s hand at work can strengthen our faith and our marriages. Tell someone a story of God’s blessing in your life. If it’s particularly good, they may even want to hear it twice.

Pray with Us

Our field representatives, located across the country, would be grateful for your prayers. May they display the fruit of the Spirit as they assist Moody’s ministry partners in making planned gifts to Moody through their wills and trusts.

Isaac and Rebekah: A Generous Love

Yesterday we saw how this longest chapter in Genesis had many hints of God's hand over Abraham's family and the "seed of promise." Today we see how the events of this story tell us much about the nature of marriage itself.

Though we can't be sure, many believe that Abraham's "senior servant" is Eliezer of Damascus, who would have been Abraham's heir had Isaac not been born (15:2). Isaac's birth ended Eliezer's chances of great wealth, but he showed love for both Abraham and Isaac in undertaking this journey of hundreds of miles, with a mission that, if successful, would further undermine his inheritance. Eliezer obeyed Abraham out of generosity.

Abraham's servant trusted God enough to leave the result with Him, but that did not preclude using his own wisdom. His test (v. 14) did much to reveal character.

To give a person water would mean basic, expected hospitality. To give water to a camel after a journey of hundreds of miles required a sacrifice. Rebekah not only worked hard to water the camels (a long process), she offered lodging. She gave freely of herself and her household. The fact that she left her family to marry someone she had never met showed her to be a woman of trust and faith.

I'll draw water
for your camels
too, until they
have had enough
to drink.

Genesis 24:19

The backdrop of generous giving should inform our understanding of Isaac and Rebekah's marriage (v. 67). After such a long story, we might expect a more drawn out ceremony, but the marriage took place when Isaac "brought her into the tent." The sexual act is indeed the "act of marriage," when husband and wife give of themselves freely to one another. In a story filled with generous love, their marriage is the perfect consummation to this narrative!

Apply the Word

The principles outlined here matter to all marriages. When founded on generous giving, our unions will be a source of life and blessing. This blessing is not intended just for ourselves, but also for us to share with our children, relatives, and others in our lives. Whether or not you are married, pray that God will make your life a source of blessing to others.

Pray with Us

Will you add Greg Thornton, Senior Vice President of Media, to your prayer list? Greg requests your prayers as he and his teams work together to utilize emerging technologies to increase the global impact of Moody's radio and publishing ministries.

Isaac and Rebekah: Marry for Holiness and Find Love

Everyone loves a happy ending to a romance, and the end of chapter 24 is a beautiful conclusion for the story of Isaac and Rebekah. But this ending seemingly drops from the sky. There's no courtship, not even any flirting between the guy and girl so prevalent in many so-called romantic movies. And yet we know that this marriage not only worked for God's redemptive purposes, but also that they genuinely cared for one another (24:67; 26:8).

So she became
his wife, and he
loved her.

Genesis 24:67

Like any marriage, theirs was not perfect (26:1–10). Parenting must have strained their relationship because of how they played favorites with their sons. But their story can teach us much about what marriage is and is not.

Marriage does not concern itself primarily with personal fulfillment but with God's good intention for humanity. Isaac needed marriage in order for God to fulfill His specific redemptive promise

through Abraham. All marriages can help fulfill the creation mandate to "be fruitful" and exercise dominion over creation (1:28). While weddings are great celebratory occasions, we should not forget that they involve an ending of one way of life. Rebekah left everything for Isaac, and wedding ceremonies reflect this idea of sacrifice when a father presents his daughter to the groom before the altar. Each marriage also births something new, so even childless couples represent the new life that God gives.

A famous song intones, "First comes love, then comes marriage," but for all its benefits romantic love is not a prerequisite for marriage. The "mystery" (Eph. 5:32) of marriage creates love between husband and wife. Just as God first loves us (1 John 4:19), so we should see marriage as a living instrument of God's love for us. God creates love through our marriages.

Apply the Word

The stresses of life have often played a role in ending marriages. Christians know that suffering can help produce growth (Rom. 5:3). If we see marriage as meant for something more than our happiness, we hand the troubles in our marriages to God and watch Him make us more holy. Pray for those who are struggling to remain faithful in their marriages.

Pray with Us

Will you pray for Moody Publishers Operations: Michael Davis, Ann Hackler, Mattie Hill, Elisabeth Ireland, Sandy Kleinhans, Duane Koenig, and Gregory Miller? Ask God to bless this team with wisdom to operate effectively.

Lamech: A Violent Marriage

At the end of Genesis 2 we rejoice with Adam. The arrival of “woman” completes Adam and creation itself. Today we see that perverting God’s design in marriage brings terrible consequences.

The first detail we learn of Cain’s descendants is that “Lamech married two women” (v. 19). No specific prohibition against polygamy had been stated yet in Genesis, but it obviously violates the principle of two marriage partners becoming “one flesh” (2:24). The Trinitarian image of equality and mutual giving becomes impossible in polygamous relationships. Jealousy, suspicion, and pain are inevitable.

Context also indicates that polygamy has connections to Cain and his line making a name for themselves on earth (4:17). They showed, as commentator Matthew Henry noted, a “clever industriousness” about acquiring worldly

things. Cain dwelled in Nod; his physical dislocation reflected spiritual turmoil, which his descendants turned to furious activity. Lamech’s marriages show this desire not to love and be loved but to possess and to make himself great.

Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah.

Genesis 4:19

If God intended marriage to reflect His loving purpose, then we can expect that introducing disorder to marriage will result in hatred and evil. Lamech’s wicked deeds knew no bounds. Cain succumbed to evil (4:7), but Lamech created a song to celebrate his murders (vv. 23–24). He failed to honor

the life-giving purpose of marriage, and so cared nothing for the lives of others. The language of “seven times” and “seventy-seven times” uses a poetic formula to show he placed no limits on his self-assertion against others. Polygamy did not make Lamech this way, but we cannot miss the connection between his marriages and his violence.

Apply the Word

Lamech’s song of horror has a wonderful contrast in the words of Jesus. When asked about forgiveness, He used very similar seven-fold language that Lamech used, but to a totally different purpose (Matt. 18:21–23). If someone has wronged you, follow the example of Jesus and not Lamech—extend forgiveness and life in the name of the Lord.

Pray with Us

Dr. John Jelinek, vice president and dean of Moody Theological Seminary, requests your prayers for the modular courses beginning today at MTS’s Chicago campus. May our seminary students be better equipped for ministry as a result of these courses.

The Nephilim: Brakes on the Train Wreck

Today we examine a confusing passage, but its message is still clear: the evil brought into the world in Genesis 3 continues to wreak havoc.

Some commentators interpret this passage to mean that the godly line of Seth sinned by marrying outside the faith into Cain's line. But usually the phrase "sons of God" refers to angels, not people (cf. Job 1:6), and the passage gives other clues to support this. The offspring of these marriages become the "Nephilim," a race of giants (Num. 13:33), from whom Goliath may have descended. Many other ancient cultures have stories of "gods" consorting with humanity, just as they have flood accounts that parallel the biblical narrative.

The chaos introduced through Cain and Lamech upset the harmony and order God established, but now angels threw gas on the fire. Evil was expanding ex-

ponentially. Lamech took two wives, but now these disobedient angels (Jude 6) married anyone they chose, with disastrous results. The phrases "heroes of old" and "men of renown" (v. 4) look positive at first, but should remind us of Cain's descendants in Genesis 4.

With no thoughts toward a heavenly country, the Nephilim did all they could to establish themselves on earth. We now have an misrepresentation of the divine on earth, a horrible parody of the image of God. In Genesis 3 Adam and Eve perverted the

closeness of their relationship and led each other into sin. Now marriage itself had become a tool to defy God.

But God acts. The long lifespan at that time (cf. Gen. 5) gave them plenty of time to make themselves "men of renown," so God acted to limit their time on earth. Hopefully this would put brakes on the train wreck mankind had made of God's good creation.

The sons of
God . . . married
any of them they
chose.

Genesis 6:2

Apply the Word

We appreciate the gift of freedom, but freedom without restraint turns into slavery to sin. When we trust that God made the world for our care and enjoyment, we can thank Him for the freedom He gives. The boundaries He sets are signposts pointing to our true happiness with Him. May we desire to bring Him glory, not seek our own renown and pleasure.

Pray with Us

Campus Network—Johnny Wu, James Hickman, and Kyle Sparrow—provides access to network applications, data, and services. Join us in thanking God for their important behind-the-scenes work that helps Moody's ministries run efficiently.

Abraham and Lot: The Tragedy of False Hope

Abram and Lot's families represent polar opposites in many ways, but today in our reading we see that they shared a common flaw. Their abuse of God's gift of sexuality brought terrible consequences.

We can understand Sarai's doubt in the promise of a son, which from the beginning seemed ludicrous. Lot's daughters had just left the glamour of Sodom for life in a cave (19:30), not a place likely to enhance their prospects of remarriage. No matter where our sympathies lie, however, all of these women failed to trust in God's provision and did not understand the consequences of sexual sin.

We have already seen that God gave marriage in part to make humanity partners in bringing forth new life. The physical act of union creates a spiritual bond. This is what makes Sarai's

instruction to Abram to "build a family" through her servant Hagar so tragically misguided. Abram's physical union with Hagar created an entirely new family apart from Sarai, evidenced in Abram marrying Hagar by sleeping with her (16:3). Sarai recognized this after the fact, and then she cruelly insisted that Abram banish Hagar and Ishmael after Isaac's birth (Gen. 21:8–10).

Lot's daughters showed both the moral carelessness of their father and Sarai's impatience. Not coincidentally, the fruit of these incestuous unions

resulted in two nations that would later be Israel's direct enemies. God gave Ishmael protection and blessing, but his descendants were not children of the promise. God can always bring good from evil. But we must understand that because our sexuality is such a powerful gift, its abuse may lead to dire results.

Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.

Genesis 16:2

Apply the Word

Many of our own sins—whether sexual or otherwise—have the same root of failing to trust God. We think our needs are not being met, and we try to solve the problem rather than believe in God's provision. If the Holy Spirit has convicted you of any sin, confess, repent, and trust the Lord to provide for you.

Pray with Us

Elizabeth Brown, Vice President and General Counsel, offers valuable legal counsel to Moody's education and media ministries. Praise God for her willingness to use her legal expertise to serve Him at Moody.

Jacob: Impetuous Actions

Yogi Berra was known for his quips and malapropisms, including this favorite: "It's déjà vu, all over again." We might feel like Yogi Berra if we compare Genesis 24 with the opening of our reading for today. Both stories include Laban, an industrious woman, and the search for a wife.

But the two courtships go in different directions. The story of Isaac and Rebekah is filled with divine twists that bring them together; the story of Jacob and Rachel is filled with human machinations that threaten to keep them apart.

While Abraham was careful to send a servant for Rebekah, we first note that Jacob was alone and far from home, a disadvantageous position. Even under the best circumstances, he would find it difficult to establish an independent household while under Laban's roof. From the start we sense that Laban was in control of events.

He worked for Laban another seven years.

Genesis 29:30

Jacob also had no money and no immediate prospects, which meant no security or dowry for Rachel. This led to the very steep price of seven years of labor, an arrangement guaranteed to benefit Laban, with Jacob forced to trust that Laban would be true to his word.

The encounter at the well also has subtle differences from chapter 24. When Jacob was informed about Laban's watering practices (v. 8), he quickly disregarded them (v. 10), perhaps to impress Rachel. The incident reveals

Jacob's impetuous character that would create more problems for him later.

Brides traditionally wore heavy veils, but for Jacob to sleep with Leah and be unaware that she was not Rachel must have meant that either he drank himself senseless or he chose to ignore doubts in the moment. Either way, Jacob's cavalier approach to that night set up much unintended pain.

Apply the Word

Is there an area in your life that you've treated too casually? Whether it's marriage, parenting, job responsibilities, or church service, pray that the Lord will strengthen your focus. Have you been characterized by an impetuous spirit, thinking only of now rather than eternity? Pray that God will enable you to exhibit patience.

Pray with Us

It is our privilege to pray for new students beginning orientation at Moody Bible Institute today. May God provide each of these students with meaningful friendships and a new church home.

Jacob's Family: The Shadow of Lamech

For the past four days we've been looking at characters in Genesis and the ways that they misused God's gift of marriage. Some were motivated by a lack of trust in God; others by a desire to have whatever they wanted. As we conclude this section of our study, we'll see that Jacob falls more into the second category. We'll also see that God's plans are not foiled by our mistakes.

Laban cheated Jacob out of marrying Rachel, but in order for Jacob to marry the love of his life he would have to marry two wives. The consequences of deceit and manipulation continue to spiral downward. We might wonder if Jacob knew the story of his grandfather Abraham and the sorrow caused by his relationship with Hagar.

Jacob had a favorite wife, and this led to him having favorite children. When

he was fearful of meeting Esau, he made sure to put the maidservants with their children first and Rachel and Joseph last (33:1–2). If Esau attacked, those more favored would have time to escape.

This favoritism created strife and division within his family, and now the people chosen by God were characterized by jealousy, grief, violence, and lying. It culminated when Joseph's brothers conspired to sell him into slavery, sending him to Egypt. Eventually an entire nation of God's people would be enslaved

there. But as Joseph himself noted, "Do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you" (Gen. 45:5). God was still working through these flawed people to bring salvation and deliverance.

When his brothers
saw that their
father loved him
more than any
of them, they
hated him.

Genesis 37:4

Apply the Word

Perhaps you can point to sin or mistakes in your marriage and family life. You might have suffered the consequences of these wrong choices. But be encouraged that God is still working in your life, and He can redeem your situation for His glory. His mercy is so great that He continues to call us back to Himself, even when we have gone far astray.

Pray with Us

Please remember Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody's president, in your prayers. Request that God give Dr. Nyquist discernment as he leads Moody's ministries in equipping people across the globe, cultures, and generations with the truth of God's Word.

Adam and Eve: Life to Death, Death to Life

Few things are as demoralizing in parenting as when a child screams, “I hate you!” to a parent who has just offered loving correction. Whether it comes from a toddler or a teenager, these words reveal a rejection of a parent’s care and discipline. Loving parents have a small insight into how God must feel when we reject His guidelines and gifts.

Our study transitions today to look at characters in Genesis who were sojourning—whether literally or figuratively—either toward or away from God. We begin with

Adam and Eve, who stopped seeing creation as gift and started to seek their every fulfillment through it (3:5). But God is our only source of life, and He did not make creation to replace Him.

The first consequence is a new fear of God, as they could not bear the thought of facing Him (vv. 8–10). With this

relationship poisoned, their alienation infected all other aspects of their life. In 2:23 Adam rejoiced in Eve, but now he blamed her for everything (v. 12). Eve also refused responsibility (v. 13). The joy and freedom they enjoyed with each other had disappeared.

The Lord God
banished him from
the Garden of
Eden to work
the ground.

Genesis 3:24

In losing intimacy with God and each other, they also lost their relationship to creation. God meant for Adam and Eve to bear His image by bringing forth life, but now they will both experience pain and hardship as they do this (vv. 16–18).

God’s judgment banished them, but verse 22 shows His motivation. Had they eaten from the tree of life, they would not die, and thus could not be redeemed. His love was the foundation of His judgment. God knew their tendency to deify creation, and their physical and spiritual exile from it would give them a chance to know Him again.

Apply the Word

Adam and Eve thought their sin ended the possibility of knowing God. But God pursued them and immediately planned for humanity’s redemption (3:15). Our sin will always have consequences, but just as God protected Eve from Satan, God’s love for us remains despite our sin. He longs to protect us and save us from our idolatry of the gift.

Pray with Us

Dr. Thomas Shaw, vice president of Student Services, oversees several departments, including Academic Records, the Alumni Association, and Food Service. Join us in asking God to encourage his heart and refresh his spirit in this new year.

Cain and Abel: He Whom He Loves, He Disciplines

Wise preachers and Bible teachers have long taught that we are always in motion in our relationship to God: we are moving either closer to Him or further away from Him. In our reading today, we continue the theme of sojourn as we examine the character of Cain. This first child who was born into God's creation decided to move away from God's commands, and as a consequence he was sentenced to literal exile.

Genesis 4 opens on a mixed note. Adam and Eve started to fulfill their creation mandate (1:28), but their first son did not give any evidence of a heart inclined to relationship with God. When God confronted Cain about Abel's death, his response revealed his self-absorption (v. 9).

God's punishment touched on Cain's greatest fear (v. 14), but it also showed His mercy. The Lord had banished Adam and Eve from Eden in order to protect

them. He now exiled Cain as a consequence of his sin, but He still gave him a mark of protection.

Like his parents, Cain sought security and permanence outside of God. His descendants produced much in an earthly sense, and we should marvel at the gifts God gives even to the unjust. They built cities, fashioned musical instruments, forged tools, and developed agriculture. But God's salvation would not come from Cain's line.

God has granted
me another child in
place of Abel.

Genesis 4:25

The chapter's end shows God at work. Eve had another son, Seth. God was still faithful to His promise to Eve to provide victory over Satan through her line. We are told that Seth's descendants were spiritual sojourners who moved closer to God; Enoch "walked with God" (5:24), his heart on things above. Cain and Enoch were both sojourning, but they were moving in opposite directions.

Apply the Word

Which direction are you moving? Are you like Cain, so focused on your own desires that you care nothing for others or God's will? Or are you like Enoch, desiring to know God more and orienting your life around His desires? Pray that throughout this month and this year your spiritual sojourn will lead you to know and love the Lord more.

Pray with Us

Will you remember in prayer the Student Services team at Moody Bible Institute—Spokane? Ask the Lord to give Tina Armagost, Brian Jaworski, Leah Schneider, and Daniel Ward great joy as they carry out their responsibilities today.

Noah: God's Presence, Creation's Hope

The speed and scope of creation's unraveling from Genesis 3 until our text today should astonish us. The rebellion began in the hearts of Adam and Eve, spread to their descendants, and then polygamous marriages between angels and women created a cruel and violent race. All that God intended for creation seems lost, and this deep sorrow penetrated the heart of God (6:5–6).

Genesis 5 showed us that the effects of evil were felt by Seth's line, for no matter how long they lived they did eventually die. If we do not appreciate the extent of death and evil, we will not rejoice over the words, "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (6:8). Once again, God chooses a person through whom He will deliver His promise.

We may recall the furious activity of Cain's heirs, but now one of Seth's

descendants builds something—but for a completely different purpose. God's specific directions for the ark's construction made sure that it could serve as a place of rescue. It also foreshadowed the next time God will give such exact instructions: when the Israelites would build the tabernacle. The ark represents God's ongoing care; creation has hope through God's mercy.

Noah spent decades building the ark, which must have looked ridiculous to his contemporaries. But Noah did not act alone. God brought the animals to him directly and shut the doors Himself. God was in control (note the ark's lack of rudder), with all that remained of humanity and animals along for the ride. By 8:8, water covered the earth, with a dove hovering above it. The connection to 1:2 is clear. Noah is a new Adam, and through him God refashions the world.

But Noah found
favor in the eyes
of the LORD.

Genesis 6:8

Apply the Word

We may not see Noah as a sojourner because he did not leave his land. But the story of Noah reminds us that our calling begins in the heart, and our sojourn of obedience begins when we follow what God is calling us to do. None of us will face the extremes that Noah dealt with, but all of us can find "favor in the eyes of LORD" by following his example.

Pray with Us

Today our prayers go to God for Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of education. Under Dr. Venugopal's leadership, Moody is equipping over 3,500 men and women to serve Christ's church.

Question and Answer

By Dr. Winfred O. Neely, Professor of Pastoral Studies



Why are we commanded “to love the LORD your” God with all our heart, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:4)?



This should remind us of the importance of immediate context. The commandment is the logical and practical outcome of the preceding words: “Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” Since the LORD is the one and only God, believers should be firmly attached to Him and love Him with all our being—heart, soul, and strength. This means that we give Him our exclusive devotion. No one else other than God is worthy of such devotion, commitment, and worship. What an important reminder and challenge for those who claim to love and serve the Lord today!



Deuteronomy 6:5 says, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” But in the Gospels Jesus adds, “with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). What is going on here?



Very good observation! It is true that in Deuteronomy 6:5 we are told to love the LORD with all of our heart, soul, and strength, and it is true that in the Gospels Jesus includes the “mind.” You

may have also noticed in Deuteronomy the word *all*. We are not merely to feel nice things about God, but we are to love Him with every facet of who we are—heart, soul, and strength. The mind is clearly implied in this text, but Jesus highlights what was implied by adding the word *mind*. He emphasized the importance of the thought life and mental devotion of believers. He deliberately extended His own word to include the intellectual dimension of Christian living. We are to love the LORD with all of our minds, which entails learning how to think Christianly and biblically about all of life.

For help with loving the LORD with the mind, I suggest the following books: *The Christian Mind* by Harry Blamires and *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* by Mark Noll.



I am going through some difficult times in my life. I have prayed to God about my situation, but I still lack clarity about my circumstances. His silence on this matter is troubling to me. What should I do?



Dear Christian, you are not the first person to struggle with God’s seeming silence in the midst of pain. I want to commend you for spending time in prayer and honestly talking to the Lord about your circumstances. The quest

Continued on next page

God wants us to trust Him based on His Word and not on our circumstances in the difficulties of life.

Continued from previous page

for clarity is something that people will travel the world to find, and your lack of clarity and understanding during this difficulty is not unique (see Job 3:1–31:40).

Sometimes we gain insight from looking at our past through the rearview mirror of time, but other issues may not be clear until we get to heaven. I must also say, with as much compassion as I can muster, that your first task is to renounce your desire for clarity and learn to trust the Lord (Prov. 3:5–6). In the difficult circumstances of our lives, the Lord does not always grant clarity or give us a detailed rationale for His dealing with us. He just shows us who He is. He reminds us that He is omnipotent, good, faithful, all knowing and infinitely wise, loving, holy, merciful, and gracious. He wants us to trust Him based on His Word and not on our circumstances in the difficulties of life.

Getting to know God better will not answer all of our questions, but getting to know God better will settle our doubts when life is not clear. If you have a computer, I suggest that you find the following sermon: “But When Life Tumbles In, What Then?” by Arthur Gossip.



The longer I walk with God, the more conscious I become of my own sinful nature.

How do we come to terms with the fact that we are deeply sinful?



One of the realities that deeply troubles seasoned Christians is not the specific things that they have done, but rather the growing awareness of the depth and evil of our own sinful nature. Growth in Christ brings awareness that our fallen nature is utterly sinful and evil; we are shocked at how great the potential for sin the flesh has. This is to be expected (see Rom. 7:8–13)!

When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, He gives us eternal life (John 3:16). The Holy Spirit takes residence in us (Rom. 8:9–11), but our sinful nature is not removed (Gal. 5:16–21), and we will not experience deliverance from its presence until the day we go home to be with the Lord or when Jesus returns (1 Cor. 15:50–57). In this life, we are not delivered from the presence of sin, but this additional truth is crucially important for every believer to know: we are being saved from its power as we say “no” to sin, and “yes” to God, based on His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:1–23; 8:13).

Understanding the continued presence of sin still in us should keep us on our knees in prayer to God for strength to resist temptation and receive forgiveness when we fall. Understanding our deliverance from the power of sin and the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit should cause us to thank the Lord every day for delivering us from our own selves!

Context Before Abraham: A Tower of Ambition

Last year scientists in Japan announced that they intended to clone a woolly mammoth within the next five years. They believe they now have the technology to use long-frozen woolly mammoth tissue to create new specimens of the extinct creature. In making mankind in His image, God gave humanity vast creative capability. Unfortunately, our technology-obsessed society usually considers only whether we can do something, rather than if we should.

The LORD scattered them from there over all the earth.

Genesis 11:8

The problem with this tower in our passage was not the building per se, but rather its purpose. The repeated use of “Come let us” in verses 3 and 4 echo God’s own words in 1:26. The people wanted to build not to create something beautiful or useful, but to “make a name” for themselves. The height of tower completes this distorted picture. Once again, mankind sought to challenge God and take His place.

God takes this seriously (11:6), not because we can actually supplant Him, but because this diabolical cooperation supported humanity’s delusion. God wants fellowship with us even when we sin. He does not want to see people deluded about their own glory instead of acknowledging Him. Verse 2 indicates that they traveled east, where many believe Eden may have once existed. Mankind wanted immortality, but on their own terms apart from God. Babel shows us that heaven will not be grasped through human ambition; it is given as a gift of God.

God’s own usage of “let us” (v. 7) reasserts His control, and this provides the context for the genealogies that introduce us to Abram. With humanity as a whole failing to walk with God, He focused on one man through whom salvation will come. God would also call him from his comfortable surroundings to follow Him.

Apply the Word

How are you using your gifts and talents? The story of Babel reminds us that our creativity and ambition comes from God and should be used for His glory, not our own. Are you building a legacy of faith, or a monument to yourself? As you think about your gifts, ask the Holy Spirit to direct you in ways that you can use these in service to the Lord.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody’s education ministry, please ask the Father to encourage faculty serving in the Sports Ministry department at Moody’s undergraduate school in Chicago: Christopher McHugh, Dana Daly, Daniel Dunn, and Jean Penfound.

Abraham: The False Lure of Egypt

The first eleven chapters of Genesis tell the story of God calling a people to Himself, a people distinct from those around them. The text has included examples like Enoch, Shem, and Noah. God continues to work out His plan through Abram, but if we begin reading only in chapter 12 we miss the strangeness of God's choice. Abram's wife Sarai is barren (11:30), which seems to mock God's promise: "I will make you into a great nation" (12:2).

Already God had been forced to act in decisive judgment on three occasions (see Genesis 3; 7; 11) and humanity continually seemed to try to thwart God's purposes. With Abraham we see God's perseverance. Our God will not give up or abandon His plan for His people.

Further difficulties arise. No sooner had Abram left than famine afflicted the land of his promised inheritance, forcing him

to abandon it (v. 10). Abram then willfully endangered his marriage and the promise of a new nation (vv. 11–15). But God refused to let Abram's folly wreck His design. The Egyptians suffered from a plague, and the end result was that Abram kept the livestock and other possessions given by Pharaoh despite his deception (vv. 17, 20). God's blessings upon Abram are completely undeserved. They come because they serve God's purpose, not because Abram earned special favor.

Go from your
country, your
people and your
father's household
to the land I will
show you.

Genesis 12:1

Through his obedience, Abram shows hints of comprehending God's purpose. He willingly left comfortable surroundings to sojourn in unknown territory. On his journey, he avoided the comfortable towns of Ai and Bethel (v. 8), knowing that he needed physical distance to achieve a clean break with his pagan past. This obedience was evidence that Abram had faith in the Lord.

Apply the Word

God's patience with Abram should encourage us. Despite our many failings, Abram's life shows that God uses broken vessels and often saves us from ourselves. His love for us forgives our sins and should restrain our willful wandering. Our response to this love should echo Abram's, who built an altar and "called on the name of the LORD" (12:8).

Pray with Us

Praise the Lord for Dr. James Spencer who was recently appointed vice president and dean of Moody Distance Learning. He leads Moody Distance Learning in training hundreds of students who are enrolled in our online and independent studies courses.

Abraham: The Mark of Difference

People view their preferences or unusual physical traits in different ways. Some want to blend in with the crowd and try to minimize any differences. Others celebrate their differences as part of their individuality. Today in our reading we see that God gave Abraham a new identity rooted in separation from the world around him, yet with a definite purpose.

Genesis depicts the crucial role naming plays in transmitting identity. As God created, He named (Gen. 1:5). Adam named the animals (Gen. 2:20), and parents named their children. When God changes Abram's name to Abraham, we should understand that He is remaking Abraham into something new.

Some suggest that God instituted circumcision for issues of hygiene. This may be partly true, but the command to circumcise meant much more than this. God

gave this command just after reminding Abraham about his role in creating a new people of God. Circumcision obviously involves Abraham's reproductive capacity and his role in the creation of new life. The practice of circumcision would distinguish Abraham physically, and it would also remind him of God's promise.

No longer will you
be called Abram;
your name will
be Abraham,
for I have made
you a father of
many nations.

Genesis 17:5

All males in Abraham's house, regardless of ethnicity or status, received circumcision (v. 27). Even before Isaac's birth, Abraham "fathers" many nations. The blessings Ishmael received (v. 20) foreshadow this. Later,

God commanded Israel to observe distinctive habits in things like food and dress. As with circumcision, these practices were never meant as an end in themselves. Their carefully cultivated difference reinforced their role as a "light to the nations" (Isa. 49:6). God's people sojourn in the world not for ourselves only, but that others might follow.

Apply the Word

Romans 12:2 exhorts, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world." This contrasts our creation in God's image with our desire to make a home in this fallen creation. Like Abraham, we are to sojourn with God in order to bless those around us. We may have to make changes that allow us to better reflect our true home and great hope in His presence.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody Distance Learning, remember John Knight, Richard Lin, John Engelkemier, Alin Vrancila, Kevin Mahaffy, Maria-Elena Franco, and Kerwin Rodriguez. May their work raise up ministry leaders who know and love His Word.

Lot: Powerful Judgment, Powerful Grace

Amy knew she should stop shopping. Her credit cards were a mess, and her parents had bailed her out of one financially precarious situation. But she kept finding herself at the mall or on her favorite online shopping sites, buying just one more outfit or home décor item.

Lot kept making similar choices, even after Abraham rescued him. He stayed in Sodom, blind to the dangers of trying to make a home in this world. What should give us hope, however, is that the text highlights God's mercy and undeserved favor.

Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

Genesis 19:26

this concession to Lot's weakness (v. 21). From Abraham's intercession in chapter 18 through the judgment itself, God's mercy is behind the scenes.

Lot's example led his family astray, but again God showed mercy and wanted to save them. Lot's wife could not bear to turn away from sin. Her gaze back at Sodom was more than a passing glance. After repeated warnings, she showed where her "treasure" was (Matt. 6:21). Her fate should warn everyone who is tempted to disobey God's command.

Sodom's story includes judgment, but in key moments God intervened on Lot's behalf. He hesitated and risked death in verse 16, but the men dragged him away: "for the LORD was merciful to them." Commanded to go to the mountains, Lot could not bear to flee the sinful city that he had made his home. He asked to stay in another city, and the angels allowed

Lot hardly seems like a hero, but the New Testament shows that God's grace extends beyond what we can imagine. Peter reveals that Lot was a "righteous" man, distressed by his surroundings (2 Peter 2:7–8). "If he rescued Lot . . ." should give us great hope as well. Even if we remain but embers, the Holy Spirit can fan us into a flame.

Apply the Word

Is God calling you to change something in your life that you've been resisting? Perhaps it's an unhealthy habit or relationship, or maybe it's an attitude. If you have felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit, accept that grace and flee from whatever has been keeping you away from God. If He rescued Lot, He will also provide deliverance for you.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Moody Distance Learning, lift up Lanna-Marie Enns, Christian Martinsen, Christine Tinker, Anthony Turner, and Feven Gebrehiwot. Their service makes Moody's undergraduate and seminary courses available across the globe.

Abraham: Keep Your Eyes on the Prize

Many of us realize that planning for our deaths can serve as an act of love and faith. Whether it takes the form of life insurance to provide for loved ones or planning our funeral service to bring glory to God, how we die can testify to what we valued in life.

By the time of Sarah's death, she and Abraham had wandered for at least fifty years. The "great nation" (12:2) promised them numbered one: their son Isaac. On different occasions (see chapters 12 and 15) God had promised them the land of Canaan, but up to this point Abraham owned none of it. Sarah's burial plot was the first bit of the "promised land" that belonged to Abraham.

To ensure his possession of the cave, Abraham went above and beyond local customs. In the ancient Near East, purchases often took place through a system of bargaining. One party made

an opening offer, then the other counter-offered, and so on. The price Ephron first cited was quite high—some estimate it amounted to a year's wages—and it was not what he expected Abraham to pay. But Abraham didn't care. He could have buried Sarah for free (v. 11), but owning this cave had crucial importance to him.

The field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.

Genesis 23:20

We gain greater insight when we understand that in the ancient world (and in many places today) people have a strong desire to lie at rest in their homeland (cf. 50:5). In Abraham and Sarah's case, we might expect

that would be Ur, where they grew up and met (11:28)—but no. The faith of both Abraham and Sarah illuminates this choice of a burial site. Their home was a place they never owned. Having seen only the merest beginning, they still trusted that God would fulfill His pledge. The Promised Land was their home, and it was where they would be buried.

Apply the Word

The end of your life can be a testimony of your faith. If you need resources for financial planning, you can contact the Stewardship department at Moody Bible Institute for assistance. You can also pass along your stories of God's faithfulness, perhaps in a journal or family Bible that your loved ones can cherish.

Pray with Us

Let's ask God to guide Steve Mogck, executive vice president and chief operating officer. As Steve leads his teams through this New Year, may God grant him wisdom, peace, and favor.

Joseph: Injustice and Alienation

Why do bad things happen to good people? It's a question that has challenged both philosophers and the uneducated. Suffering without an obvious reason can produce despair. Joseph experienced such suffering; in fact, his good deeds increased his suffering. How do we see God's goodness to His people in this story?

At first in this chapter it seems that Joseph's tragedy might be mitigated by the fact that he ended up with a prominent and wealthy Egyptian who trusted him (vv. 3–6). His brothers had sold him into slavery, but at least Potiphar recognized Joseph's talents and abilities and employed rather than abused him. But ominous notes begin again when Potiphar's wife entreated Joseph to commit adultery. Joseph not only refused honorably but also distanced himself from her and temptation entirely (v. 10).

While Joseph was there in prison, the LORD was with him.

Genesis 39:20–21

The injustice Joseph suffered underscores something we might easily overlook. Joseph is not the main character in this chapter. God is working behind the scenes. We read nothing of Joseph's intelligence or work ethic, though he probably had both. Instead, we see that wherever Joseph is, those around him are blessed (vv. 5–6, 23). Joseph has been exiled from his family, but God is using him to be a light to the nation of Egypt.

When we notice this, our perspective on Joseph's plight changes. God certainly cares for Joseph, but His main priority is to reveal Himself to a world in need. He seeks to bring others to a saving knowledge of Himself. Joseph's suffering is tragic and undeserved, but the real point is that with him in Egypt, a great and populous nation can see the power and mercy of God. God cares about Joseph, and He also cares about the Egyptians.

Apply the Word

We don't always know why we encounter suffering in our lives. But we must not assume that our suffering means that we have lost God's favor. Indeed, God might redeem our suffering to reveal His own grace and power in our lives. If you are walking through a valley of trials, pray that God will use you—like Joseph—to bring His light to others.

Pray with Us

In your prayers today, please mention Facilities Maintenance: Edgardo Bartolome, John Addison, Thomas Addison, and Troy Billow. May God give these employees servants' hearts as they carry out their responsibilities today at Moody's Chicago campus.

Jacob: His Final Journey

Many sports fans enjoy rooting against teams like the New York Yankees, whose power, wealth, and history of success make them a target. We love to see the mighty brought low. Jacob's story calls forth some of those same emotions. He deceived his way into his position, and we want to see his "come-uppance." But by chapter 43 many might be thinking, "Enough is enough." Jacob was no longer suffering "setbacks." He's losing everything.

For Jacob to allow Benjamin to go, he needed to let go of his fear (46:2). Joseph's "death" meant that Benjamin was his last link to his beloved Rachel. Perhaps he worried that the favoritism he had exercised would now come full circle. Sending Benjamin meant risking his greatest love, his greatest possession. Perhaps he also feared God. He had lost so much. He may have wondered if God had just set him up in order to knock him down again.

I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again.

Genesis 46:4

Jacob had already traveled much in his life, but God asked from him one more journey: a journey of faith that would make his physical journey possible. We know that he later went to Egypt, but first he had to let Benjamin go, trusting God for the safety of his beloved son.

We do not hear God speak in chapter 43, but we do see His presence. Judah has been transformed from the depths of sin and misery (Genesis 37–38) to offering himself for Benjamin (43:9–10). Such a change can only come from God Himself. Judah's

actions foreshadow the sacrifice of his greatest descendant (Matt. 1:3). Through Judah, God tells us that He understands Jacob's fear of losing a son all too well. Far from setting up Jacob in order to knock him down, God had brought Jacob here so that what he lost, he would find again.

Apply the Word

Like Jacob, our greatest journey may mean trusting that God truly is with us, even in the midst of our own difficult experience. Pray for the faith of Jacob, and pray for God to reassure you of His presence (46:3–4). Thank Him for the way that He is able to lead you in faith to the place where He wants to bestow His blessings in your life.

Pray with Us

Continuing in prayer for those serving in Facilities Maintenance, will you ask God to give strength, health, and safety to Vincent Camera, Paul Heggeland, Matthew Morris, Carl Bjerga, and Jacob Shumaker?

Joseph: Egypt and the Promised Land

Fictional superhero characters like Superman have amazing strength, awesome special powers, and unwavering commitment to the cause of truth and justice. The characters in the Bible are not superheroes. They are ordinary people who are used by an extraordinary God, and Scripture is not afraid to reveal their flaws.

Unquestionably Joseph possessed great faith and great gifts from God. But our chapter today presents us with a dilemma. Some commentators see Joseph losing his way, taking advantage of the famine to further Pharaoh's oppression of his people. Others see Joseph as a faithful servant to his master, saving people from starvation through prudent policy. The text itself does not directly address whether Joseph's actions were good or bad, and this should let us know that we should view this chapter through a different lens than Joseph's morality.

Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt . . . that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh.

Genesis 47:26

Joseph's actions were deeply embedded in a society that we know would come to oppress God's people. Joseph's service to Pharaoh and Egypt was within a civilization that in Genesis posed a threat to God's people (Gen. 12; 26:2). God used the regime in Egypt to provide food for His chosen people, but the Lord never intended His people to leave their promised land forever. Their sojourn in Egypt was intended for only a season.

As Egypt fell into poverty, God's people prospered (v. 27). The text does not tell us the specifics of how this happened. We know that the "why" is God's unseen hand of blessing upon His people. Jacob understood this, and knew that true redemption would never come from Egypt. He demanded to be buried in Canaan (vv. 29–30) as a theological statement. It demonstrated his belief in the faithfulness of God to keep His promises to His people.

Apply the Word

All of us are embedded within a society that does not always seek to honor God. We must serve our employers honorably and embrace our civic responsibilities with dignity. Yet we should never be confused about our true Master or the source of our salvation. Our sojourn during this life should keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and the promise of eternal life.

Pray with Us

Today our prayers go to God for Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer. Ask God to continue using Ken and his teams to faithfully manage the financial resources that the Lord generously provides to Moody through friends like you.

Abraham: A Response of Worship

Gospel singer Kurt Carr wrote the song, “For Every Mountain.” The refrain declares: “For every mountain You brought me over / For every trial you’ve seen me through / For every blessing / Hallelujah, for this I give You praise.

Abraham understood what it meant to praise and worship God, both in times of trial and in times of abundance. Take a moment to review the reading for today and notice how many times the following description appears: “There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.”

From the beginning of his obedience to the call of God in his life, Abraham had a habit of worship. He built an altar to the Lord in response to God’s promise (12:7). He built an altar to the Lord after he completed a journey in the Promised Land (12:8). After God

delivered him from his misguided attempt to find safety in Egypt, Abraham returned to Canaan and called on the name of the Lord (13:4). Finally, as part of his daily life Abraham incorporated worship of God (13:18).

There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

Genesis 12:8

A life of praise and worship doesn’t immunize us to suffering or sin. Abraham still made mistakes, notably his attempt to manipulate Pharaoh rather than to trust God. His loved ones still put themselves in harm’s way, and Lot’s choice to live in Sodom set the stage for spiritual

devastation. Abraham still experienced mountains and valleys in his spiritual walk with God. But Abraham’s praise didn’t depend on his circumstances—it depended on the character of God. This God is faithful to His promises, He is always true, and He is always worthy of our worship.

Apply the Word

Do you have a habit of praise and worship like Abraham? You can start today! Regardless of your situation, give Him glory. You might sing or listen to praise songs, or review Psalm 150 and offer each verse to the Lord as your offering of worship. When we cultivate a habit of worship it doesn’t change our circumstances, but it does change our perspective!

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody’s finances, pray for Treasury Operations, which handles student financials as well as Moody’s cash management. Praise God for the talents He has given to Gloria Parker, Diane Sergeant, and Eunice Childress.

Our True Rooting Interest

When watching a sporting event, children often want to cheer based on morality. "What's the good team?" they ask. While naïve, this instinct is laudable in many ways. In any story, we seek a place to stand, a hero through which to see events. This chapter frustrates all of those instincts, at least at first glance.

We can pity Isaac, an old man who merely wants to bless his oldest son, an event that seems natural. But we know from Genesis 25:23 that Rebekah had been told that the older son would serve the younger son. We might wonder why Isaac would perform this blessing in private and not as a public celebration. We cannot root for Isaac in his efforts to thwart God's purposes.

We can pity Esau as a bumbling fool (25:29–34), but his stupidity comes from a spiritual sloth, evidenced by his polygamous marriages to Hittites (26:34).

Rebekah cannot be our champion either. She had the right result in mind, but we see where her youngest son inherited his ability to manipulate situations.

We certainly can't root for Jacob. Without hesitation he invoked God's name in a brazen lie (27:20), using words he knew would melt Isaac's grieving heart (26:35). As usual, sin alienates these characters from God, but also each other, and this fragile family splinters apart in fear and rage (27:41).

Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The Lord your God gave me success," he replied.

Genesis 27:20

Behind the scenes, outwitting all those who thought themselves clever, our Champion works. God was not pleased by their actions, but He is the sovereign Lord whose plans cannot be thwarted. He can redeem even our failures for His purposes. Esau's anger causes Jacob's flight, which put him in position to marry within Abraham's promised family line. God will make a holy people for Himself.

Apply the Word

Jacob's exile brought him pain, but God used his journey to transform him. When we feel alone in our surroundings, Jacob's story should encourage us. Our exile might be the beginning of our transformation, a chance to see God and His world anew. If you find yourself out of your comfort zone, thank God that He is working in your life to bring good things.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Treasury Operations, join us in asking the Lord to bless this team: Janet Mitchell, Holly Motta, and Lindsey Reimers. May they work together well as they serve the Lord at Moody.

God the Great Rescuer

For those who find satisfaction in poetic justice, this chapter shows Jacob getting more than his fill. His mother aided his deception of his father Isaac; now his maternal uncle turned the tables, and Jacob had to suffer the consequences.

But in other ways, a notion of justice cannot explain what happens in this passage. After all, if Jacob deserved payback, Rachel and Leah did not. In the previous chapter, God met Jacob in a miraculous way and assured him of His favor. But how could the events of our reading today include

God's favor? Finally, we want this story to be about the romance between Jacob and Rachel, perhaps similar to that of Isaac and Rebekah, but things seem to go horribly wrong instead.

God's seeming absence in the first thirty verses does not reflect His lack of care

or His tacit approval of anything that happens. Rather, we might say that God refuses to allow His good name to be dragged into this mess of lies and deceit. Jacob's travels brought him to "the land of the eastern peoples" (v. 1), the place God called Abraham out of. God

is of course omnipresent, but this is not where He wanted His people to be. Abraham wanted to make sure, for example, that Isaac not seek his wife there lest he stay away from the land God promised (24:6-7).

When she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah.

Genesis 29:35

As soon as we read of Leah's suffering, God enters the story and opens her womb (v. 31). The injustice of her situation motivated God's action, which is consistent with His character in caring for the poor and oppressed. In "rescuing" Leah, God highlights a crucial theme of His story: whatever the depths of our evil, His love is strong enough to bring good out of it.

Apply the Word

Chapter 29 shows God as the hero, and it also shows us an unexpected heroine. Leah's suffering led her to see God as the main source of provision for her life. She could not rely on her husband or her father or her sister, but she could trust in God. When we are suffering, we can turn to the Lord who hears, cares, and acts on our behalf.

Pray with Us

Each week, Moody Radio reaches more than one million listeners with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Praise God for the Marketing and Development team that serves this ministry: Roy Patterson, George Economos, Stephen Asare, and Bruce Everhart.

God Condescends

Mark Twain once said, “Truth is stranger than fiction.” That phrase could apply to Jacob’s life. No one could invent this story! In our reading today, it seems like this story is about to come to an end. Jacob is on the verge of meeting his brother who long ago vowed his death (27:41).

Ever the clever man, Jacob made a variety of preparations to try to ensure his safety, sending servants out ahead with costly gifts for Esau (32:13–21). His eloquent prayer in 32:9–12 shows his desperate need, but he had no peace. Not until he was alone did God intervene. Jacob has exhausted the time, space, and energy to run away from God any more.

Usually when the playwright walks on stage, it signals the end of the performance. But in this instance, God finds a special means of intervention that shows extraordinary condescension to the

frailty of man. For we either must say that Jacob was stronger than God, or that God allowed Jacob to get the upper hand.

Many people erroneously think that God wants worship in order to appease His injured dignity, but that is the last thing on God’s mind here. He knew Jacob, and stooped to conquer him. Jacob’s tenacity results in the blessing he craves, though God leaves a lasting reminder of the encounter by damaging his hip. Israel would always be stamped with the impact of this touch (v. 32).

We know from 33:1–17 that Jacob still schemed and manipulated. But we also know that with his name changed to Israel, Jacob began a new journey, one that would end with him worshiping, leaning on his staff as he blessed the twelve tribes (Heb. 11:21).

Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel.

Genesis 32:28

Apply the Word

Jacob’s perseverance echoes Jesus’ parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1–8. Our trials often weary us, and we may wonder why God leaves us adrift. But as writer George MacDonald once said, God is easy to please, but hard to satisfy. If we trust Him in the midst of our anguish and refuse to let Him go, we may find great blessing as Jacob did.

Pray with Us

We invite you to pray for Moody Radio Florida—Pierre Chestang, John Blok, and Katherine Bruington—broadcasting from studios in St. Petersburg. Ask the Lord to use the biblical teaching aired on Moody Radio Florida to transform lives.

God Is Not Safe

All of us know that life has ups and downs, and we often want a God who is predictable. That is one reason why Joseph's story can be so difficult for us. God is never invoked or even mentioned in this chapter. Why would He let Joseph be so mistreated?

Joseph might have been immature to assume that it was a good idea to tell his brothers about his dreams of power and authority over them (37:6-11). On the other hand, these were divinely given revelations. We can understand that his brothers had years of resentment built up toward Joseph due to Jacob's obvious favoritism toward him. But nothing justified their impulse to kill him (37:20).

Next, Joseph was punished for righteously resisting temptation with Potiphar's wife, and his situation goes

from bad to worse (39:20). None of this makes sense! Even though we might know the end of the story, Joseph did not. There's little comfort in a happy ending that hasn't happened yet.

A crucial theme in C. S. Lewis' series *The Chronicles of Narnia* is articulated by Mr. Beaver in *The Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe*. When asked if Aslan is safe, he responded, "Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King." If we want God to transform us, we must realize that He may operate with a different agenda than we had in mind. Joseph will come to know God more fully, but it will take a long period of sojourning before that happens. We should not be too surprised at this, for his great-grandfather and his father needed the same treatment. Maybe some of us do as well.

The Midianites
sold Joseph in
Egypt to Potiphar,
one of Pharaoh's
officials.

Genesis 37:36

Apply the Word

All of us would no doubt choose being comfortable over suffering if we could. But if we reflected honestly on our lives, we would notice that often our times of greatest growth came when we faced unexpected difficulties and then saw God carry us through. Take time today to thank God for not being "safe," and for His passion for us to know Him more fully.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Moody Radio Florida, please remember Andrew Leuthold, Ronald Maxwell, and John Stortz. Thank the Father for this team's commitment to sharing the truth of God's Word with people throughout Central and Southwest Florida.

How God Uses Pain

Sin runs deep in the patriarchal family in Genesis; tragically, many of these sins are passed from generation to generation. Jacob was a schemer, and so was his son Reuben (35:22). Jacob was a trickster, and his sons Simeon and Levi trick the men of Shechem out of revenge for their sister (Genesis 34). After the disgrace of his three older brothers, Judah, the fourth son, assumed leadership.

His idea to preserve Joseph's life needs to be examined against this backdrop of deception and violence. Judah's concern for Joseph's life was mixed with interest in the profit they would get when they sold him (37:26–27). Judah was always calculating how he could get what he wanted and maximize his own desires.

Judah's selfishness is on full display in Genesis 38. He had left his family, possibly for an opportunity to marry

a Canaanite. This choice removed him from the sphere of blessing promised to God's chosen people. The tragedies of his sons' deaths, followed his wife's passing, make a wreck of the life Judah thought he built for himself (38:6–12). Judah still stayed away from his family, and this isolation no doubt contributed to his unwittingly fathering a child with his daughter-in-law. Not for the first time in Genesis, the deceiver gets deceived.

Finally we see a broken man. Judah's remarkable confession (v. 26) reveal this side of him for the first time. So far in our study this month we have discussed sojourning as a physical and spiritual separation that helps to create a need for God. Suffering can also have this effect. As the de facto leader of his brothers, we see later how crucial Judah's transformation was to the future of God's people (see Genesis 43 and 44).

After all, he is our
brother, our own
flesh and blood.

Genesis 37:27

Apply the Word

Some of us know people who have wandered from church and suffer as a result of their choices. Our heart rightly aches to see their suffering. But God may have greater purposes in mind than mere relief from pain, and we should pray accordingly: that God will use that pain to remind them that they need the Lord, just as He did with Judah.

Pray with Us

Join us in praying for Educational Technology Services: Benjamin Dallmann, Josue Reyes, Rebekah Campbell, and Timothy Canfield. Ask the Lord to give this team wisdom as they assist students and faculty with using modern technology.

God's Secret Care

Today's reading involves the dramatic events of dreams, famine, marriage, and birth. The narrative quickens in pace and deepens in detail. But with all this, we might miss the main event. Behind all of the excitement lies something—and Someone—greater.

The chapter begins with Joseph still in prison, with events out of his hands. Pharaoh's dream not only caused his release, it also propelled Joseph to the heights of power in Egypt. Within a few years, "all the world" came to Egypt because of Joseph's actions. Joseph had gone from slavery to become the most important man in the known world.

But this story is not really about Joseph. Instead, God is moving behind the curtain. To begin, Pharaoh's dream (sent by God) not only "saves the world," it also secured Joseph's release from prison. The cupbearer forgot him, but God did

not. However global the scale of God's actions, He never forgets a single one of His children.

The Egyptians celebrated and honored Joseph (vv. 41–43, 55), inadvertently giving credit to the God he worshiped.

Joseph never schemed his way to the top. Both the dreams and their interpretation belonged to God (vv. 16, 28). Joseph was in charge of everyone on earth except Pharaoh, but the names He gave his children show that power had not gone to his head (vv. 51–52). He knew the source of all His blessings.

All the world
came to Egypt
to buy grain
from Joseph,
because the
famine was severe
everywhere.

Genesis 41:57

Now "all the world" came to Egypt. But they were not coming because of Pharaoh, but because of Joseph. We saw in Genesis 39 how in these latter chapters, God follows Joseph wherever he goes. They may not know it, but "all the world" comes to Egypt for God's blessings. His glory continues to spread.

Apply the Word

Often we go about our lives unaware of God's presence. Today, reflect on your life and see how God has worked through situations. You may want to record some of these events in a journal, or even share these stories with your loved ones. Give God the glory for His work in and through you that demonstrates His providence and blessing.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Education Technology Services—Debbie Ellis, Timothy Gauger, Daniel Klyop-Spurrier, and Robert Rutherford—ask God to equip this team to serve Moody's undergraduate school and seminary with excellence.

Revealed Yet Hidden

As readers we get great satisfaction from the story in Genesis 45, as the confusion and fear of Joseph's brothers is resolved in a joyous revelation. But if we think of this story in the whole context of Genesis, we notice how unusual this story is. Something changes here: a cycle gets broken.

From the beginning, sin pulled apart Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, and then Jacob's sons. Of all of them, Joseph had the best case for revenge, and he re-

jected it. When we see such a dramatic example of love overcoming pride and anger, we know God must be involved. And yet, curiously, it seems that God has little visibility in this chapter.

That conclusion would be too hasty. We saw in chapters 39 and 41 how Joseph functions in some way as a stand-in for

God. The slow, patient way in which he revealed himself to his brothers makes for a great story, but should also teach us something about God Himself. We also see how Joseph prefigures Jesus Christ. Through him, salvation comes to his family, Egypt, and the rest of the world. Through him, forgiveness and healing is extended to those who have betrayed him.

The noted early Christian Gregory of Nazianus noted that God's preferred pedagogy is often to "reveal Himself gradu-

ally." Joseph's revelation to his brothers mirrors God's way with us. Only when the desperation of his brothers reached its height could they see the effects of their sin (Gen. 44:33-34). Only after the darkness of chapters 42 through 44 could Joseph see and make his great declaration: God intended all of these tragic events for good (50:21).

And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them.

Genesis 45:15

Apply the Word

All of us have moments of despair, times when we feel that God has abandoned us. Such times call for us to strengthen our sight that our faith might grow stronger. Today, reflect on those times when God, though He could not be seen, was really right behind you all along. Then take the time to give Him thanks and praise for His care for you.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Education Technology Services, we invite you to lift up Michael Schulte, Frederick Schultz, Gregory Skorik, Andrew Thisse, and Jason Floyd. May this team experience God's mercy and grace as they serve at Moody today.

A Journey Completed, A Journey Begun

G. K. Chesterton's most famous character was Father Brown, a priest who solves mysteries. He looked at men's hearts as well as bits of cigar ash, and in "The Flying Stars," Brown comments, "It is not generous to make even God's patience with us a point against Him."

Many of the stories in Genesis seem to point to God's absence. The pain, mistrust, and violence that begins in Genesis 3 has multiplied, with Jacob and his family even guiltier than most. We want God to act! But perhaps something else has been going on all along.

Jacob had run from problems his whole life, but now with death facing him he was a man at peace, a man of faith. Through three generations, Abraham's seed seemed no closer to inheriting Canaan, but Jacob knew that his home was the one piece of land Abraham did own—a tomb (49:31). Perhaps it has

been God's patience at work all along (Gen. 15:16), not His absence.

With Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers worried about the cycle of revenge and retribution beginning again. They likely invented the story in verses 16 and 17.

But with the cycle broken, they have a new beginning. Joseph's declaration (vv. 20–21) shows that this healing has roots in God's actions, not His absence.

Genesis does not end on a fully triumphal note. Years after Jacob's death, the Israelites are still in Egypt, and they don't appear

any closer to their goal. Joseph doesn't even get carried "home" as Jacob did. God's people still need to be rescued, but perhaps that's the point. This story is not ultimately about Abraham, or Lot, or Jacob. The story doesn't end in Genesis because God's work doesn't end in Genesis. The story is about His ongoing relationship with His people.

God will surely
come to your aid
and take you up
out of this land
to the land he
promised on oath.

Genesis 50:24

Apply the Word

As we reflect on the drama that unfolded before us this month, we should not forget the main point. The characters we've seen reveal a larger truth. Chesterton knew this when he wrote in his *Introduction to the Book of Job*, that "God is not only the chief character of the Old Testament; God is properly the only character in the Old Testament."

Pray with Us

We trust you've been encouraged by this month's study of the characters and themes in Genesis. Today, let's take a moment to thank our Creator who is actively working in our lives, drawing us into a closer relationship with Him.

VISIT THE TODAY IN THE **Word** WEBSITE!



- Home
 - Education
 - Broadcasting
 - Publishing
 - Conferences
 - Today in the Word
- Today's Devotion
 - This Month's Issue
 - Archives
 - About
 - Resources
 - Giving
 - Manage Subscriptions
 - Contact Us

TODAY IN THE **Word**

Search Today in the Word:

Manage Subscription

[Subscribe](#)

[Update My Subscription](#)

[Report a Problem](#)

SUPPORT
TODAY IN THE WORD with YOUR GIFT TODAY

SUBSCRIBE
to TODAY IN THE WORD DAILY DEVOTIONS

View Devotion Archives

◀ November ▶ ◀ 2012 ▶

Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10



Today's Devotion

A Stewardship of Grace

For those who love detective novels, a mystery means that there's a puzzle that needs to be solved. Those who figure out the clues can solve the mystery. But in today's passage, Paul uses the term mystery in a different sense. This mystery was a matter of revelation. The mystery that Paul wrote about was something "which was not made..."

This Month

For many of us, the first word that comes to mind when we think about our relationship with the church is complicated. The critic in us looks around on Sunday morning and notices flawed people, the judge in us notes the lack of spiritual zeal in fellow-parishioners, the theologian in us suspects insufficient depth in the pastor's sermon. The list goes on and on, and too often we get mired in the...

Looking For More



This Month's Study at a Glance

A look at this month's devotions.



Today with Paul Nyquist

Because of His Great Love for Us



Theology Matters

The Submission of Christ

- See devotional topics at a glance
- Read this month's or a previous issue
- Manage your e-mail or mail delivery preferences
- Support *Today in the Word* with a gift

www.todayintheword.com

new from

JAMES MACDONALD

& Moody Publishers

START THE JOURNEY TOWARD A

DEEPER FAITH



Discover deeper, stronger engagement
with God through spiritual disciplines.



moodypublishers.com

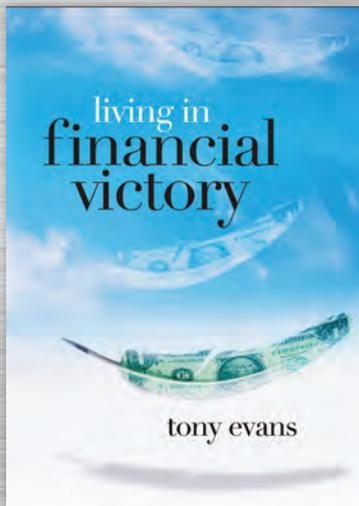
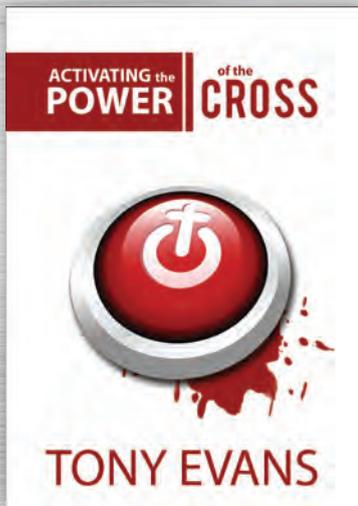
 **MOODY**
PUBLISHERS

AVAILABLE AT YOUR FAVORITE LOCAL OR ONLINE BOOKSTORE OR CALL 1-800-678-6928



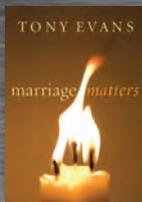
The KINGDOM AGENDA

Series



In The Kingdom Agenda Series, Dr. Tony Evans explores God's intentions for every area of life including family, finances, church life, and much more. His thorough, biblical approach will help you identify and pursue God's agenda so that you can live your life as He intends. **Activating the Power of the Cross** will compel you to live in the strength of the cross, and **Living in Financial Victory** will motivate you to view money the way God does. The time has come for Christians to reevaluate and recommit to pursuing God's one and only Kingdom agenda. Are you willing?

OTHER BOOKS IN THE SERIES



moodypublishers.com

 MOODY PUBLISHERS

AVAILABLE AT YOUR FAVORITE LOCAL OR ONLINE BOOKSTORE OR CALL 1-800-678-6928

LEAVE A LEGACY FOR YOUR FAMILY AND FOR THE WORLD



Ensure the proper management of your affairs, provide for your loved ones, and support Moody Bible Institute's ministries.

Organize your estate plan through a revocable living trust, which enables you to:

- Appoint someone you trust to manage your affairs if you become unable to do so
- Avoid probate (court involvement in the distribution of your estate)
- Reduce administrative costs
- Ensure the prompt distribution of your assets

Find out more! Ask for the free brochure, *Legacy to the World*.

Simply check the box on the enclosed tear-out card. Moody's Stewardship team can help you determine if a revocable living trust is right for you. Call 800-801-2171 or e-mail stewardship@moody.edu.