

## Questions:

1. Have you ever read the Bible just for the narrative? Why or why not?
2. Listening to the narrative we have gotten through so far has it helped in your understanding of the Bible at all yet?
3. God worked miracles in the lives of Abraham and Sarah to create for Himself a people. What miracles has He done in your life and what do they make you think?
4. Do you see Jesus (or things pointing to Jesus) in the story so far?
5. What “wrestling” with God have you done? Do you see the need to continue wrestling until you receive the blessing rather than giving up and taking the easy way out?

## Week 2

### Week 1 Recap:

God creates the Heavens and Earth. Genesis 1 portrays God as reigning over chaos by bringing life and light out of it.

### Genesis 1:1–2 ESV

1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

God made mankind as His “imagers.” They are tasked to represent Him on the earth by having dominion over the earth and everything in it. They are also tasked to fill the earth.

### Genesis 1:27–28 ESV

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Man disobeyed God by desiring “more” than what God had allotted to them.

### Genesis 3:4–6 ESV

4 But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God they brought Chaos (death, sickness, pain, etc.) into the world.

The earth tumbled further and further into darkness until only one man from a single lineage was righteous in God’s eyes, Noah.

## The Flood

God had had enough; he would start over with Noah. So, God had Noah build a boat. After it was completed, God assembled animals of every kind and brought them to Noah. Noah and his family entered their boat and sealed the door.

It rained for 40 days and 40 nights, and the earth gave up its water. Noah, his family, and all the animals in his care stayed on that boat for 371 days while Creation reset itself. For those 371 days, Creation returned to that Chaos from Genesis 1:2:

Genesis 1:2 ESV

2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

God was with Noah and his family. They started their new life after they set down on the ground, but things were a little different this time.

Genesis 9:1–2 ESV

1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. 2 The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.

They were to be fruitful and multiply as God had commanded Adam and Eve many years ago, but something was left out this time. They were no longer to have dominion over the earth and the animals. You see that authority had been given up, stolen by the serpent and the other sons of God who had rebelled against Yahweh.

## **The Table of Nations**

Noah’s family was fruitful and multiplied. We are given a list of all the nations they became, 70 in total. That number will be significant later.

## **The Tower of Babel and the Third Rebellion**

There came a time when God looked upon his earthly family and saw they had not listened to his command to fill the earth. Instead, they had one language and stayed together at Babel, which would later be called Babylon.

Those living in Babel said to themselves,

Genesis 11:4 ESV

4 Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”

In those days, a tower built into heaven (a ziggurat) was used for one thing: to attempt to control God to get Him to do what they willed. But Yahweh will be controlled by no one. He ends their prideful project, confusing their languages, and scatters them across the land.

God had turned Chaos into life and light, but His human imagers had exchanged that life and light for death and darkness.

God gives to his Creation what they are asking for. God gives the nations their “inheritance,” a life without him. But he would not leave them unattended.

Deuteronomy 32:7–8 LEB

7 Remember the old days, the years long past; ask your father, and he will inform you, your elders and they will tell you. 8 When the Most High apportioned the nations, at his dividing up of the sons of humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples, according to the number of the sons of God.

Remember that “sons of God” are Yahweh’s heavenly family, often called angels, in fact in the Greek Translation of the Old Testament it even says “angels of God”:

Deuteronomy 32:8 Septuagint

8 When the Most High distributed nations as he scattered the sons of Adam, he set up boundaries for the nations according to the number of the angels of God.

God would put members of His heavenly family in charge of these nations to watch over them and lead them the way they should go. However, the betrayals on earth and heaven had not yet been finished. The spirits in charge of these nations would receive worship from those they were supposed to be ready to lead back to Yahweh, to rule with justice, and to give them knowledge of how they should go. Instead, they led the nations astray.

Psalms 82:1–8 ESV

1 God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: 2 “How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah 3 Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. 4 Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.” 5 They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken. 6 I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; 7 nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.” 8 Arise, O God, judge the earth; for you shall inherit all the nations!

With this in mind read “The Parable of the Prodigal Son” - Luke 15:11–32

## **The Call of Abraham**

God would let these nations do as they pleased for now, but His plan would not be changed, He was going to create for Himself a people who would be different from the nations and ultimately draw the nations back to Himself.

Deuteronomy 4:19–20 LEB

19 And do this so that you do not lift your eyes toward heaven and observe the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of the heaven, and be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that Yahweh your God has allotted to all of the peoples under all of the heaven. 20 But Yahweh has taken you and brought you out from the furnace of iron, from Egypt, to be a people of inheritance to him, as it is this day.

While the nations received their inheritance. God would create a people for His own inheritance. He would reveal himself to a Hebrew man named Abram, who lived near Babel. Yahweh would make a covenant with this man. God would bless the nations through his offspring, restoring them to Himself and undoing the evil unleashed upon Creation. Yahweh would give them land and promised his descendants would possess the land of Canaan.

There was only one problem, at least to Abram. He and his wife had no children and were now too old; Sarai, Abram’s wife, was barren. That may have been a problem for Abram and Sarai, but not for God. He, after all, is the one who brings life out of darkness.

Many years would go by with ups and downs until God would finally come to Abram and tell him by the following year Sarai would give birth to a son who would be the inheritor of the Covenant God made with Abram. God would change Abram’s name to Abraham, which means “great father,” and Sarai’s name to Sarah, which means “princess.”

Sure enough, that's precisely what happened. Sarah becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son, Isaac. God had kept his promise and miraculously turned bareness into life.

### **Isaac foreshadows God's great plan**

After many years, God would come to test Abraham.

Genesis 22:2 ESV

2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

Abraham did not understand but trusted Yahweh with his son.

Hebrews 11:17-19 ESV

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." 19 He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

So, Abraham saddled up his donkey, took his son, and went to a mountain. Abraham took his son up the mountain to worship God. On the way up, Isaac noticed that something was missing: a lamb. Abraham assured his son:

Genesis 22:8 ESV

8 Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

When they reached the mountain, they set up the altar and arranged the wood, and Abraham bound his son Isaac. Upon setting his son on the altar, he took his knife and went to sacrifice his son. Immediately, Yahweh stopped Abraham and said:

Genesis 22:12 ESV

12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

After this, Abraham lifted his eye and saw a lamb in a nearby thicket. Abraham and Isaac took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering.

Abraham called that place Yahweh Yireh, which means "Yahweh will be revealed or seen." But what was revealed that day? What was seen? Well, one day, a royal son of Abraham would give His life as a sacrifice. But it would not be an ordinary son; it would be Yahweh Himself, seen in the flesh, who would be born from Abraham's seed to die for the sins of the world.

### **Isaac and Rebekah**

Years later, Abraham would seek a wife for his son. He would send his servant back to Abraham's homeland to find Isaac a wife. Abraham's servant found a woman named Rebekah, who became Isaac's wife. Rebekah and Isaac got married, but all was not well for long. Rebekah, too, was barren. Not deterred

Genesis 25:21 LEB

21 And Isaac prayed to Yahweh on behalf of his wife, for she was barren. And Yahweh responded to his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Another miraculous birth occurred when Rebekah gave birth to twins. Esau and Jacob were their names. Esau means red; the boy came out red and covered in hair. Jacob literally means “to grab by the heel” because Jacob came out of the womb grabbing his brother by the heel. The imagery of Jacob’s name suggests that Jacob would not give up trying to overtake his older brother.

Yahweh would reveal himself to and gave to Isaac the same promise that He had given to his father.

Genesis 26:4–5 ESV

4 I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, 5 because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”

### **Light From Darkness**

The story thus far is not about God choosing perfect people, on the contrary Abraham and Isaac and their wives were flawed people. Abraham deceived his way into riches and tried to take God’s plan into his own hands. Isaac would follow Abraham and deceive for riches and land. What separated them from everyone else is how they responded to the Lord. Each of them responded to the Lord, became worshippers, and changed to follow Him.

Shortly before Abraham was tested Abraham got serious:

Genesis 21:33 LEB

33 And he planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of Yahweh, the everlasting God.

Isaac too, got to a point where he got serious in following the Lord:

Genesis 26:24–25 LEB

24 And Yahweh appeared to him that night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you, and I will bless you and make your descendants numerous for the sake of my servant Abraham.” 25 And he built an altar there and called on the name of Yahweh. And he pitched his tent there, and the servants of Isaac dug a well there.

We will see the same thing happen in the life of Isaac’s son Jacob:

### **Jacob and Esau**

The story of Isaac’s sons, Jacob and Esau, is one of bad decisions and deception. Esau was a hunter, while Jacob was a “quiet man who dwelled in tents.” This speaks to their personalities, Jacob was calculated while Esau was impulsive and lived for the moment. One day, when Esau came in from the field exhausted. While cooking dinner, Jacob was asked by his brother for some of the food. Jacob asked for Esau’s birthright. Esau, being shortsighted, traded his birthright for some bread and stew. Esau was the older brother, which meant he would one day lead the family. Still, in his shortsightedness, Esau sold his birthright away. Jacob’s “grabbing at the heel” to catch up to Esau finally came, and it was just the beginning.

Later, when their father Isaac was blind and about to pass away, Esau was called by his father. Isaac desired to bless Esau and requested some of Esau’s wild game before he did. As Esau went out, Jacob came in covered in

hair with some food to deceive his father. It worked; Jacob stole Esau's blessing. Upon hearing this, Esau became furious and promised to kill his brother. Jacob ran away, fearing for his life.

### Jacob meets Yahweh

While Jacob ran away from his family, he came to a place to camp, laid his head down on a stone, and fell asleep. But it was no ordinary sleep Jacob had that night, for Jacob had a dream that would change his life forever. In his dream, Jacob saw a tower with steps going from heaven to earth. Upon the steps, he saw the host of heaven going up and down from earth to heaven. At the top of the stairs, Jacob saw Yahweh himself standing.

### Genesis 28:13 LEB

13 And behold, Yahweh was standing beside him, and he said, "I am Yahweh, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. The ground on which you were sleeping I will give to you and to your descendants.

God promised Jacob the same promise that had been given to Abraham and Isaac that through his line, God would create a people for himself to carry out His will on the earth. His people would be a blessing to the nations and would inhabit Canaan.

When Jacob woke up in the morning, he was a changed man. He took the stone he used as a pillow that night and set it up as a pillar, anointed the pillar with oil, and called that place Beth-El - House of God.

### Genesis 28:20–22 ESV

20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, 21 so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, 22 and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you."

### **Jacob takes a wife, well, two wives...**

Jacob continued his journey and fell in love with a woman named Rachel. Jacob agreed to serve her father Laban for 7 years for Rachel's hand in marriage, and Laban agreed. But Laban tricked Jacob; instead of giving him Rachel, Laban sent Rachel's older sister, Leah, into Jacob's tent. When the sun came up, Jacob discovered the deception. Laban offered Rachel as a wife for an additional seven years of service, and Jacob agreed. God never intended for a single man to have multiple wives. Just because the Bible tells us something happened doesn't mean God was okay with it. God puts up with many of our shortcomings. By the time of Jesus, the descendants of Abraham had reverted to one man having one wife according to how God had intended, and having multiple wives was greatly frowned upon.

### **Jacob's twelve children**

Jacob fathered twelve children, the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel. In order of their birth, they are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. God would again work many miracles and allow barren wombs to bring forth life.

### **Jacob leaves for his homeland**

After 14 years, Yahweh came to Jacob and said:

### Genesis 31:13 ESV

13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.' ”

So Jacob, Leah, and Rachel left for the land that Jacob had run away from 14 years earlier. Jacob believed his brother would still be set to kill him, so he sent offerings of peace ahead of him to Esau. He even sent his wives and his children before him.

### Genesis 32:24–30 ESV

24 And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. 25 When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. 26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." 27 And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." 28 Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." 29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. 30 So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered."

Jacob's name was no longer Jacob - one who grabs the heel. His name was now Israel - strives with God. In the morning, Israel (Jacob) goes on his way to meet his brother. To his surprise, Esau forgave Jacob. The two brothers made amends and went their separate ways.