



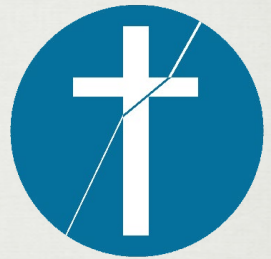
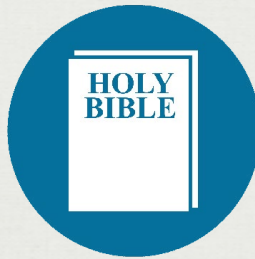
# ADULT CONNECTION



# CONNECT CLASS

# MAY 2017

# STEWARDSHIP



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

## A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

The theme for the month of May is “Stewardship.” One of the keys to good stewardship is the realization that we are stewards of God’s blessings and provisions in our lives. This stewardship extends to many different facets of our lives. As stewards, it is required that we are found faithful ([1 Cor. 4:2](#)). We are to be faithful in our Finances, Family, Faith, and Forgiveness. Throughout this month, we will cover each of these topics endeavoring to assist you in learning and reinforcing how to be faithful stewards in these areas.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Oftentimes, unfaithfulness as a stewards stems from a lack of faith in God and His ability to sustain us as He honors His Word while working in our lives. Hebrews 11:6 says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God.” I am sure it is your desire to please God, so trust Him and know that He is faithful ([Hebrew 10:23](#)).

-Blessings  
Pastor Don



## *Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively*

### *Introduce*

**Day 1:** Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Instruct*

**Day 2:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

**Day 3:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Inspire*

**Day 4:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

### *Incorporate*

**Day 5:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

**Day 6:** Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

**Day 7:** Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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# *Stewardship of Finances*

## *Genesis 28:10-22*

Focal Verse:

*"And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."*

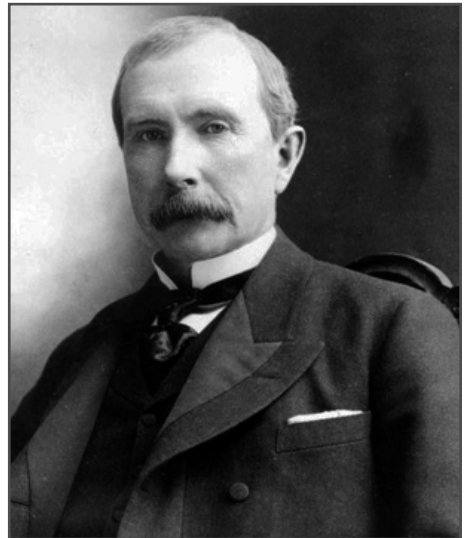
*Genesis 28:22*

## Introduce

Many people who do not tithe begin by listing a number of excuses about why they can't. One of the most common excuses is that they don't have the money or they don't feel financially stable enough to give that which God has required. Those who don't tithe lament, "If only I made more money, then I'd be able to tithe." Look around you; everything you see belongs to the Lord and He has entrusted it to you as His steward or caretaker. Even those who consider themselves financially unstable or even impoverished in this country have been blessed beyond measure. The problem that most people encounter when considering tithing is that they look at what they don't have or an imaginary goal of what they think they will need to begin tithing; when we look at what we don't have, we will never be in a financial position to tithe because no matter how much money we earn we will always have bills and taxes which means we will never have enough.

At the turn of the twentieth century, several books recount John D.

Rockefeller, Sr.'s testimony about tithing. Rockefeller learned at an early age the value of tithing from his mother. As a young lad, he began working to support his mother—earning a mere \$1.50 per week. Upon bringing the money home and presenting it to her, she explained that 10% of it belonged to the Lord and she would be elated if he would give \$.15 as his tithe. Rockefeller recalled that he gave it joyously and continued to tithe on every



## Introduce

dollar that he would make. Years later when asked about his faithful stewardship, Rockefeller explained, "I have tithed on every dollar that God has entrusted to me, and I want to say to you that I could have never tithed on my first million if I had not tithed on my first salary which was \$1.50 a week." Rockefeller amassed a fortune more than four times that of the richest person in the world today and his net worth, according to *Forbes*, would stand at \$340 billion dollars today. The point is not to say that Rockefeller became rich because he tithed, but it is to emphasize that even when he earned a paltry salary of \$1.50 per week he was faithful in giving. \*see page 19

Tithing is a concept developed in the Old Testament before God gave Moses the Law ([Gen 14:20](#)) and then explicitly commanded within the Law itself ([Lev 27:30](#)). Jesus upheld the intent of the Law in the New Testament for He said that He did not come to abolish it, but to fulfill it ([Matt 5:17](#)). Later, He explained that we should also give unto God what is His ([Matt 22:21](#)). As we will see in this lesson, Jacob, the patriarch, gave out of spontaneous generosity in response to the blessings that God had given him rather than to fulfill a legal obligation alone; thus, he desired to honor the Lord for the blessings that had been poured out upon him. Like his grandfather Abraham, Jacob has set a standard which we should follow in giving one-tenth of the possessions with which God has entrusted us back to Him for His glory and honor.

Key  
Question

Why should you tithe?



### Genesis 28:10-11

#### REMAIN IN GOD'S PRESENCE:

With **night** having already fallen and after traveling all day, Jacob found himself alone and in the middle of the wilderness, so he gathered some

**stones** and fashioned them into a **place** where he could sleep ([Gen 28:10-11](#)). To understand why Jacob found himself in this isolated **place**, we need to go back several days to see when his adventure began. After returning from the field famished and tired, Esau, Jacob's



brother, sold his inheritance (birthright) to him for a mere bowl of stew ([Gen 25:29-34](#)). This, however, didn't mean that Isaac, their father, would bless the younger son Jacob and bestow the birthright upon him; therefore, Jacob along with his mother, Rebekah, conspired to trick the aged man with failing eyesight. Dressed in goat skin to imitate the hairiness of his brother, he brought his father his favorite dish, and deceived him into pronouncing the blessing upon him ([Gen 27:5-29](#)). Esau, however, returned home immediately only to find that he had been swindled out of his birthright, so he flew into a violent rage and sought to kill Jacob ([Gen 27:30-41](#)). After being informed of Esau's ire, Rebekah bid Jacob to flee to Haran and reside with her brother who would protect him until it was safe for him to return ([Gen 27:41-45](#)). After a discussion with Rebekah, Isaac

## Instruct

blessed Jacob and sent him to Haran—not only for his safety, but also to find a wife there so that God would continue to extend the blessings that He had promised to his father, Abraham ([Gen 27:41-28:5](#)).

In [verse 10](#), this is where we find Jacob—on his journey from **Beersheba** to **Haran**. He has reached a **place** where darkness necessitated that he camp for the **night**. Undoubtedly, his choice of lodging and the circumstances by which he left home caused him much uncertainty about his future: Would he make it safely to Haran? Would he find a suitable wife there? Would he ever see his family and the Promised Land again? In many ways, his journey paralleled that of his grandfather, Abraham, when God called him to go to a land that He would show him ([Gen 12:1](#)). Neither Abraham nor Jacob knew exactly how their journeys would end nor did they know about all the problems that they would encounter along the way, but they trusted God to direct their paths and meet them in their time of need. Indeed, it wasn't by chance that Jacob chose to lodge in this **certain place**, but it was a divine appointment whereby God would reveal Himself to His servant in a personal and unique way.

### In-Depth Information



*In English, we may assume that the phrase a place is a generic reference to “any old place,” but in Hebrew the word is repeated three times with the definite article (the) in front of it. Therefore, he did not merely come to a random place and stop, but he came to the place that God had ordained.*

In what ways has God required you to trust Him on your journey? How did He reveal Himself to you along the way?

Question  
# 1

At this time in life, Jacob literally had nothing but the clothes on his back and that which he could carry with him on his journey. Yet, that didn't stop him from trusting in God. In our own journeys, God may not always give us material possessions in excess or even what we think is absolutely necessary, but He always provides what we need along the way. God expects us to trust Him in the times when we have little and in those when we have much. If we can't trust God in the times we have little, how can we trust Him in the times when He gives us much?

Why is it important to view life from the perspective of what God has given us and not from what we expect or think we require to live comfortably?

Question  
# 2

## Genesis 28:12-15

### **REMEMBER GOD'S PROMISES:**

As Jacob rests from his arduous journey, he begins to dream ([v. 12](#)). We often focus on the **ladder** reaching to **heaven** and **the angels of God ascending and descending** in an attempt to figure out what they mean; yet, what is most important is what God reveals to Jacob directly. For **the Lord**, not the **angels**, stands at the end of the **ladder** and speaks ([v. 13](#)). When He speaks, He reveals His identity through the typical phrase: **I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac**. We often gloss over this pronouncement without meditating on its significance.

## Instruct

By making this personal connection to Abraham and Isaac, God not only reminds Jacob about His presence with them, but also His faithfulness to His promises. The very names Abraham and Isaac together emphasize the fulfillment of the long-awaited heir and the beginning of the promise to make Abraham the father of many nations. We could list many instances in which God was faithful to Abraham and Isaac—whether from His protection of Abraham in Egypt ([Gen 12:10-20](#)) or Isaac from Abimelech during a time of severe famine ([Gen 26:1-33](#)). Just as God was faithful to these patriarchs, He continues to be faithful to us as His people today.

### In-Depth Information



The **ladder** and **angels** symbolize God's willingness to communicate directly with His servant. God often uses **angels** to deliver His messages, but in this dream He emphasizes His own guarantee to fulfill His promises by speaking directly to Jacob. Any attempt to spiritualize or add to this interpretation loses the force of Jacob's dream and misses the point.

In what ways has God demonstrated His faithfulness to you?

Question  
# 3

God not only reminds Jacob of the promises He made to his forefathers, but He also demonstrates how they will apply to him. God begins by repeating three of the promises that He made to Abraham through His covenant: 1) He would give Jacob the land upon which he now lies ([Gen 17:8](#)), 2) He would make his **descendants** as numerous as **the dust on**

the earth ([Gen 13:6](#)), and 3) through his descendants **all the families of the earth will be blessed** ([Gen 12:3](#)). Like his grandfather and father, Jacob would become a conduit through which God would work to fulfill

His promises and continue to build a legacy in which His people would be His representatives to draw others into a relationship with Him.

Jacob's father, Isaac, represented the initial fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to provide an heir through Sarah so that he could have

**descendants** as numerous as the stars in the heavens and the **dust on the earth**. Yet, none of the patriarchs would see the completion of God's promise to give them the land; that promise would span generations and come after a four-hundred-year enslavement in Egypt ([Gen 15:13](#)) and a forty-year wandering in the wilderness. Nonetheless, God fulfilled His promise to Jacob's descendants when Joshua and Caleb crossed the Jordan River and took possession of the Promised Land. From our perspective, God seems slow to act and deliver upon His promises, but we must remember that we do not have the wisdom or the foresight that He does (see [2 Peter 3:9](#)). He fulfills His promises at exactly the right time. We must trust God and learn to wait upon Him; while we wait, God helps us to mature in our walk and grow in our faith so that we can be examples for future generations—just as He did with Jacob.



What legacy are you leaving for future generations through your actions, attitudes, and finances?

Question  
# 4

## Instruct

Through this dream, God also reassures Jacob at a time when he's most vulnerable in his life—for he is alone, in the middle of nowhere, and uncertain about his future. God reminds Jacob that He is **with him and will keep him wherever he goes** ([v. 15](#)). Often, when we encounter difficult times, we look around and wonder where God is in the midst of our circumstances. We have this uncertainty because we begin to focus on our circumstances rather than on God. We forget that He's right there with us because we become too busy thinking about what we can do rather than trusting in what He can do. Instead, we must look to God for guidance every day in our lives—whether things are going well or terribly. God tells Jacob that He will be **with him wherever he goes**. He doesn't tell Jacob that He will be there only he gets into trouble or needs help; he also doesn't tell him to wander aimlessly through life without a plan seeing where the winds of change may take him. On the contrary, Jacob should look to God daily for guidance; God will ordain the path His servant should go and fulfill His promises to him. Thus, God reassures Jacob that He **will not leave** him and will indeed fulfill **what** He has **spoken** ([v. 15](#)). Just as God has been faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and now Jacob, He will also be just as faithful to us, standing by our sides during times of turmoil and triumph to see us through (see [Heb 13:5](#)).

What are some of the difficult or uncertain times through which God has brought you? How did you grow in your faith? How did those times lead you to respond to God?

Question  
# 5

***RESPECT GOD'S HOLINESS:***

Waking from his **sleep**, Jacob was in awe of God's holiness and faithfulness so he immediately began to worship Him ([v. 16](#)). No longer did Jacob feel alone and uncertain, but he realized **the Lord** was **in this place**. Yet, what made Jacob **afraid** and ashamed is that he had stumbled upon **the house of God** and **the gate to heaven** and he didn't even **know it** because he had let the circumstances of life overwhelm him ([v. 17](#)). To this point in his life, Jacob had undoubtedly heard the stories about the Lord from his father and grandfather, but he never really had a personal relationship with Yahweh whereby he surrendered his life wholly to serve Him. As we will see in his confession in the next section, this encounter with God has changed all that.

Jacob **rose early** that **morning**, turned the **stone** on which he had slept upright to serve as a reminder not only to him but also future generations of his encounter with the Lord. He then **poured oil** over the **stone** in recognition of the



awesomeness of this divine encounter at **this place** ([v. 18](#)). Jacob then renamed the place **Bethel**, the house of God, from its previous name, **Luz**, the place of refuge ([v. 19](#)). Each one of us should have a "stone" in our lives to which we can point where God sought us in a divine encounter to save us. When we remember that event and how God surprised us even in our ignorance and sinfulness, we should respond to God with genuine

## Instruct

thanksgiving and joy in worship. Perhaps some of us can't point to such a stone in our lives because, like Jacob, we trusted in our heritage to save us; perhaps some of us have trusted in church attendance, baptism, or good works to save us. Yet, we must have a personal, divine encounter with the Lord where we accept His invitation for salvation and allow Him to radically transform our lives.

Describe your encounter with God at your stone. How does that affect your worship, service, and giving unto the Lord today?

Question  
# 6

## Genesis 28:20-22

### RENDER TO GOD HIS TITHE:

In response to God's holiness and His benevolent promises, Jacob **made a vow** with the Lord ([v. 20](#)). In this context, to make **a vow** has a meaning more like that of a confession; thus, Jacob makes a profession of faith whereby he begins his personal relationship with the Lord. To this point in his life, God has been mentioned as the God of Abraham and Isaac, but a relationship with the Lord is not something hereditary, passed down from generation to generation. For this reason, God speaks directly to Jacob through his dream and offers him a personal invitation to have a relationship through which he would participate in the covenant with his forefathers. Prior to this encounter with the Lord, Jacob had defrauded his brother, lied to his father, and was forced to flee his homeland, so he desperately need a personal relationship through which God could transform him. Consequently, on this **night** Jacob surrendered his life to



the Lord as his **God** ([v. 21](#)).

To make his **vow**, Jacob employs a conditional sentence: **If God will be with me, and keep me . . . and give me bread to eat and clothing to wear . . . then the Lord shall be my God**. At face value in modern English, it looks as if Jacob is stating that his relationship with the Lord will depend upon what God will do for him. In Hebrew, however, the word **if**, when used in this context, carries with it the force of **because**; therefore, **because** God has done these things for Jacob already, when people will see the **stone** they will be reminded of His faithfulness. Thus, Jacob's **vow** demonstrates four areas of dependence upon God: 1) guidance (God **will be with me**), 2) protection (**keep me**), 3) provision (**give me bread . . . and clothing**), and 4) His personal relationship (**the Lord shall be my God**).

Like Jacob, we depend upon God for everything that we have: we depend upon God for wisdom and direction, we depend upon God to meet our basic human needs, and we depend upon God for our salvation because none of us can ever save ourselves. Therefore, we shouldn't bargain or make deals with God that specify "if" God does X then we will do Y. On the contrary, we should respond to God's faithfulness in the same way that Jacob did. Because of what God has faithfully done for us, we should want Him to receive the glory and honor when people look at the legacy that we leave—just like the **stone** that Jacob left marking the place he called **Bethel**—the house of God.

Why should our tithes not be conditional based upon what God will do for us but rather a response to what He has already done?

Question  
# 7

## Instruct

Not only does Jacob leave a physical marker (**stone**) for this occasion, but he also pledges to return **a tenth of all that** God will **give** him ([v. 22](#)). Jacob establishes the precedent of giving God **a tenth** of his income whatever that may be. At this point, Jacob has no guarantee that God will enrich him monetarily in exactly the same way as his forefathers; he doesn't bargain with God and say when I have so much livestock, gold, or precious jewels, then I will tithe to you **a tenth**. On the contrary, Jacob says **and of all that You give me I will surely give you a tenth**. Moreover, unlike his grandfather, Abraham, this is not a one-time gift, but as God blesses and provides for him, Jacob will continue to return **a tenth** unto the Lord which is inherent in the way that this is phrased in the original Hebrew language. As this lesson draws to a close, think about all the ways in which God has demonstrated His faithfulness to you—not just financially, but through His guidance, protection, provision, and salvation. Is it too small a thing to trust in God when we tithe as an act of worship that He will continue to remain faithful to us in every way?

Why should tithing be one of our regular acts of worship?

Question  
# 8

In modern society, the topic of tithing has almost become taboo because many organizations compete for donations, including the church. However, as followers of Christ a regular act of worship should be our tithe to demonstrate the many ways that God has blessed us beyond measure. Scripture clearly indicates that we should tithe to our local church to advance the ministry of that congregation ([Mal 3:10](#); [Mark 12:41-44](#)); any donations outside of the church to parachurch or secular organizations are in addition to our tithes. Moreover, Scripture tells us we are to tithe on everything that God gives us that includes or time, talents, and finances—it's not a one or the other proposition. Because of God's faithfulness, we should show our gratitude to Him by joyously and generously giving—remember that everything we have in actuality belongs to the Lord. Trusting in God, the first portion of our income and possessions should be given to Him to further His work of sharing the gospel with the world around us.



Have you ever heard or have you yourself said: “I just can’t afford to tithe; I don’t have the resources.” Rather than seeing what God has given us we are looking at what we don’t have. If you say that you don’t have the resources, take an honest evaluation of your life. We live in a society which promotes excess and living a lavish lifestyle. Certain luxuries have

been misconstrued as absolute needs. God doesn't expect us to live in poverty, using our resources miserly, but He does expect us to use them wisely; we should avoid getting ourselves into debt by buying things we don't need or that are more expensive than the money we have. Instead of putting things on credit cards for instant gratification, save for them and then buy them when you have enough money.

In addition, evaluate your income and develop a budget to help you live within your means. For example, many of us, including myself, spend much more on dining in restaurants than we ought. Putting aside all the

excuses about not having time or being too tired to cook, budget your money by immediately setting aside your tithe and then dividing the remaining money among the categories which are priority: mortgage/rent, utilities, auto, health, and food. In the food



category, for instance, set aside money to eat out in restaurants—when that money runs out then make sure you have saved enough to eat at home.

Like many other things in life, with money we are required to make choices and order our priorities. What is a priority for you? Obeying God's request that we return a portion of our income to Him or living a lavish lifestyle here on earth, but not being able to take any of it with you when you die?

When we tithe, it indicates two principles in our lives: 1) we trust God to take care of our needs and 2) we are grateful to the ways in which God has been faithful to us and included us in His eternal plan so that we give spontaneously and joyously. We should follow Jacob's example in giving a tenth of our possessions to the Lord because of the genuine work of transformation that He has completed within us.

### *Incorporate*

In what ways do you demonstrate your trust in the Lord: 1) physically, 2) financially, and 3) spiritually?

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How does tithing indicate our trust in the Lord for His provision?

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## Incorporate

Honestly evaluate your giving: Do you give a tenth or even more of your income to the Lord or do you give only occasionally a few dollars here and there?

I give 10% or more

I give occasionally when I have the resources

I give a few dollars per week

I never give

If you're not tithing faithfully, pray and ask God in what areas you need to make choices to budget your resources better so that you can give what God has required. List the areas in which you need to budget better here.

### ***\*In Reference (from page 5)***



*For Rockefeller's testimony, see Christal Clayton, Questions and Answers about Tithing, 9th ed., 1978, p. 51. For the Forbes article see Carl O'Donnell, "The Rockefellers: The Legacy of History's Richest Man," in Forbes Magazine, July 11, 2014.*

# ***Journal: Document God's Work***

*May 14, 2017*



# *Stewardship of Family*

## *Genesis 2:15-25*

Focal Verse:

*"And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*

*Genesis 2:18*



## Introduce

Several years ago, nearly two decades now, my mother would pester me about getting married. Working hard to graduate college in four years with a double major and preparing to attend seminary in the Fall of 2000, I rarely had time for the frivolities of mingling socially with others. During a phone conversation with my mother, she began to recount the value of marriage and how ultimately it could help me achieve my educational goals. She explained, “You need someone to help cook, clean, do laundry, and run errands for you.” Without pausing, I replied, “If that’s all a wife is and does, then I’ll just hire a maid—she comes with less problems too.” I continued, “Seriously, is that how you would describe your relationship to Dad?” Without giving her a chance to respond, I interjected, “Marriage is so much more than



*“I wish that all men were as myself” (1 Cor 7:7).*

domestic duties; it’s about being a counterpart—not just one who shares similar ideas and interests, but one who respects my God-given role in marriage and in the church, complements my weaknesses, supports my decisions, and encourages my walk with the Lord.”

In the family, just as in the church, we have different roles that complement each other and help us to live in unity with the purpose of glorifying God. When God ordained the institution of marriage at the foundation of the world, He designed it to maintain the stability and function of society. Sin, however, caused dysfunction in our families by distorting our God-given roles, creating strife and disunity. Society today has even pressed further

## Introduce

not only to blur the distinction between male and female, but in essence to destroy the unique way that God has created us altogether. The Bible clearly states that both male and female were created equally in God's image ([Gen 1:27](#)), but this equality with respect to value doesn't negate the roles that He has assigned us individually.

On Sunday, we will honor our mothers who played a pivotal role in our development. Through many of their actions, we can see the distinctive role that God has established for mothers and wives in the family. Although many of our mothers do many of the domestic chores for their family, they have much larger role than that. Our mothers nurtured us as they cared for our emotional and social needs as we matured. They protected us as much as they could by establishing boundaries, but also implementing punishment when we ignored them. They also provided for our needs often by sacrificing their own. They gave structure to our lives and often took the time to make sure we learned valuable lessons that prepared us for life. In light of the assault by society on the family, as we look at Eve, the mother of all living ([Gen 3:20](#)), let's look at the God-given potential of families who live according to His standards and roles.

### Key Question

What are the distinctive roles that God has given mothers/wives?

### Genesis 2:15-17

#### **THE NEED FOR OBEDIENCE:**

On the sixth day of creation after breathing life into the first man, **God put him in the garden of Eden**, demonstrating an intimacy in orchestrating man's life above all the other created animals ([v. 15](#)). Because He loves

mankind so much and wants us to have an abundant and fruitful life, God prescribed duties for the man to undertake as well as set boundaries which he should follow. First, He instructs Adam **to tend and keep the garden**; work, which later becomes cursed



because of sin, is a privilege rather than a punishment. The word translated **tend** comes from the Hebrew word which we most often translate as serve; thus, the act of working or tending to the **garden** should be viewed as a ministry because Adam, and we by succession, should **tend**, or serve, in the same compassionate and diligent way that God has for mankind. Consequently, our care for creation also becomes an act of service rendered unto God by fulfilling the duty which He delegated to us. God tells Adam that he should also **keep** the **garden**. The word translated **keep** carries with it the idea of protecting and guarding; the word is used in a religious sense of guarding the tabernacle from enemies and impurity ([Num 1:53](#)). Because God charged man with the responsibility of guarding the **garden** and his wife, Adam's sin of allowing the serpent to influence Eve and

## Instruct

destroy the **purity** of the garden by convincing them to eat of the **fruit** demonstrates an erosion of the roles in the first marriage as God had intended them.

According to God's command to Adam in [verse 15](#), what is man's responsibility in the home today?

Question  
# 1

Second, God establishes boundaries by which Adam should live obediently to have a successful life. We often hear that Christianity consists of a bunch of rules, but in reality Adam in the beginning only had one rule by which to live and he couldn't even follow it. As a merciful and loving God, He gave Adam permission to eat **freely** from **every tree in the garden** ([v. 16](#)); He only restricted him from eating of the tree of **the knowledge of good and evil** which bore the penalty of death on that **day** he would **eat** from it ([v. 17](#)). How selfish and greedy is mankind that the first man had every tree at his disposal, except one, and that was not enough? This problem still resounds with us today as the things that God has given us and the boundaries He has set for us never go far enough to please people; they always want more—hence our propensity for addictions. In this first relationship that God created, Adam had the greatest responsibility to protect his family and home, but as the serpent tempted Eve to eat of the fruit Adam stood there unjustifiably silent about God's boundaries ([Gen 3:6](#)). At that moment, when sin entered the world,



*What do you use your devices for?*

it severed not only the relationship between God and man, but also between husband and wife, bringing stress and strife into the marriage. On that day, Adam didn't die physically, rather he died spiritually by becoming ensnared with sin which affected every aspect of creation ([Eph 2:1](#)).

In a modern world filled with ever-increasing technological advances that bombard us with temptation, how can you protect your family and keep them grounded in God's Word?

Question  
# 2

### ***Genesis 2:18-20***

#### ***THE NEED FOR A HELPER:***

For those of us who have a relationship with Christ, we can live according to the principles for which God originally created us when we surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit; therefore, to understand how God intended marriage to look from the beginning we must examine Adam and Eve's relationship before their rebellion. Up to the point creating mankind on the sixth day, everything that God had created was "good"—including man as the pinnacle of His creation whom He saw as "very good" ([Gen 1:31](#)). However, as God looked at man and surveyed creation for **a helper comparable to him**, He could find nothing—causing the Lord to declare **it is not good for man to be alone** ([v. 18](#)). Indeed, the Lord emphasizes this aspect of Adam's lack again as He specifically notes that out of **all the cattle, every bird, and every beast of the field** (wild animals) that Adam named **there was not found a helper comparable to him** ([vv. 19-20](#)). Thus, as we will see in the next section, this lack required action from God. We must remember two key things as we

## Instruct

study the God-given roles in the home whether as the head or the **helper**: 1) the relationship is reciprocal and what is said of each of the roles applies to both albeit expressed in different ways and 2) the concepts discussed in the following paragraphs will only work when both parties have a relationship with Christ and have submitted fully to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

### In-Depth Information



The Hebrew word translated **helper** in the NKJV and most of the other major translations is used only here in reference to women ([Gen 2:18, 20](#)). Most of the occurrences of this word refer to God's **help** offered unto Israel ([Exod 18:4](#); [Deut 33:29](#); [Psalm 115:9-11](#), [Hosea 13:9](#)). Like man, woman bears the image of God in the marriage relationship by fulfilling her God-given role of companionship. Although she is no substitute for God, when she lives according to God's design she points the man to God in his relationship just as the man directs her to God. Equal to man, woman uses her God-given roles to complement man by assisting him in his duties to care for creation and raise a family who knows and follows God. Problems abound, however, when marriages become competitive rather than complementary and ignore the clear roles that God has established for husbands and wives throughout His Word.

What does it mean to be a helper in terms of God's design for marriage?

Question  
# 3

When we think about marriage in terms of a **helper**, many times negative images come to mind because of the distortion that sin has caused. However, the unique way in which God created man and saw his need for companionship should cause us to treasure or appreciate a wife instead of taking her for granted. This requires husbands to lavish love upon their wives by establishing a spiritual environment in which they can flourish in the role as a godly woman ([Eph 5:25-30](#)) and protect her from spiritual warfare that may bombard the family. Therefore, husbands should show love and respect through communication which means being actively involved with their wives, not overbearing, aloof, and unconcerned. Husbands should also demonstrate their appreciation by recognizing her God-given gifts and roles and giving her the freedom to be productive while at the same time recognizing and celebrating her achievements through the help of the Lord. Moreover, husbands should take time to listen to and identify her needs, not so much fix her problems but to allow her to work through them while providing spiritual guidance and seeking the Lord in prayer as a family. When husbands provide this type of environment for their wives, it will lead to a successful marriage which is God-centered and ordained.

What other ways can you treasure or appreciate your wife?

Question  
# 4

If the husband provides the spiritual environment for the household to flourish, then what does it mean to be a **helper**? First, a **helper** provides companionship by meeting the needs of her husband to have someone reciprocate love and respect by fostering a relationship built upon trust and integrity which gives him the freedom to lead the household in a

## Instruct

godly way. Wives should care about the things which their husbands enjoy and participate with them when they can. Second, she assists her husband with responsibilities in the home as well as society at large ([Prov 31:13-16](#)); although God gave Adam the primary responsibility to **tend** and **keep** the **garden**, she should come alongside him, relieving some of the burden of caring for God's creation. A **helper** works as a team; both parents should be actively involved in overseeing the physical, mental, and spiritual development of their children ([Eph 6:4](#); [Deut 6:2-5](#)), and a wife supplements her husband as caretaker of the home in raising the children. Moreover, she shouldn't overshadow her partner in terms of dictating the direction of the home or nagging and badgering her husband with requests ([Prov 25:24](#)). Instead, she presents ideas and suggestions to him, giving him time to process the information and act at his own behest. Third, a **helper** respects her husband and actively seeks to build him up ([Eph 5:33](#)). Too often, society portrays men as weak, unintelligent, lazy, unprepared, unconcerned, and a whole host of other negative adjectives; however, even if some of these things may be true from time to time, a wife should never argue with her husband or put him down in front of others, especially their children. Certainly, God gives women insight and speaks to them just as much as men, but the best practice is to show respect and deference to husbands by discussing and working through things privately.

In what ways can you as a wife help your husband by fulfilling your God-given roles?

Question  
# 5



Single people who have never married may think that none of this applies to them, but these roles are so important that before entering marriage or any type of dating commitment you need to understand how to identify them in a spouse. If we don't know these principles in the beginning of a relationship, you may go into marriage looking for an ideal of what you think constitutes love and commitment rather than what God says. In addition, you may have numerous problems in those relationships because you don't know your own role or think that you can change your spouse to conform to your own way of thinking—this will lead to all kinds of problems if God is not the one who changes their thinking. Singles who have formerly been married, and especially if they have children, need to teach them the biblical roles of how a husband and wife should complement one another so that when they mature they can learn to identify a godly man or woman who can be their counterpart. Learn from your past, but be sure to examine what God's Word says so that you may grow further in your faith and relationship with Him.

As a single person or a single-parent household, why is it of utmost importance to know one's role in marriage?

Question  
# 6

## **Genesis 2:21-22**

### **THE NEED FOR GOD TO ACT:**

God saw the need for Adam to have a unique **helper** who would provide appropriate companionship so He acted graciously. The first man and woman were both created uniquely in contrast to all the other fowl and

land animals. Like the rest of the land animals, God **formed** man from the **dust of the ground** ([Gen 2:7, 19](#)), but to give Adam **life** God breathed into his **nostrils** in a divine display of intimacy—something that no other created object can share ([Gen 2:7](#)). In addition, for the rest of the animals God created them male and female at the same time and in the same way ([Gen 1:24-25](#)), but with Eve God created man and then fashioned her from **one of Adam's ribs** ([Gen 2:21](#)). The text notes that **God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam** ([v. 21](#))—the first recorded use of anesthesia in the Bible! From the side of the man, God took a **rib** and **made woman and then brought her to man** ([Gen 2:22](#)). Thus, God created the first couple uniquely to share intimacy with Him through a worshipful attitude of obedience. He also created man and woman and ordained marriage for them to share a unique bond and intimacy as companions.



In what ways can we acknowledge this special relationship with our Creator through marriage and in our families?

Question  
# 7

The lack of a companion for Adam necessitated God to act because not just anything would work. Relationships within the family, particularly that of a husband and wife, should be viewed as something special from our Creator—not to be exploited trivially for personal gain or explored

flippantly such as many in society tend to do today. Because it took an act of God to form such a relationship between a husband and wife, He alone should be the center of marriage and family. As valuable and precious as your spouse, children, and other family members are in your life, God, not any other individual, should receive priority. If He doesn't, then those relationships may often encounter trouble along the way. Because of the rebellion in which Adam engaged in the garden, a godly family can still experience trouble in life, but when God is the center they have a Rock on whom they can stand so that the foundation of their lives isn't shaken and when the storms of life howl they will not be blown off course.

In what ways do we need to make sure that God is the center of our relationships?

Question  
# 8

### Genesis 2:23-25

#### ***THE NEED FOR UNITY:***

After awakening from his **deep sleep**, Adam begins to process what had happened to him and acknowledges this special relationship that God has now given him. For the first time, man speaks and he declares that **this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh** to emphasize the uniqueness of the companion that God had given him ([v.23](#)). Indeed, the very title **woman** indicates that distinctive bond and relationship **because she was taken out of man**. God had acted in a gracious and loving way to



## Instruct

respond to Adam's need—further differentiating him from the rest of creation as God's most beloved part.

Just as God had given Adam responsibility to protect and care for the garden, He also gives them responsibility in marriage: to **become one flesh** ([v. 24](#)). Unity entails devotion to one another in marriage; prior to marriage, one's devotion is to his or her biological family. In marriage, however, **a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife** ([v. 24](#)). Therefore, with God as the center of the relationship, the primary concern in marriage becomes fulfilling one's God-given duties to his or her spouse. This devotion to God and one another leads to unity—becoming **one flesh**. Marriage is not about being in control, getting one's way, or being right all the time, but it's about being unified together to accomplish the will of God as a couple. Consequently, unity can be summarized in five areas: 1) purpose: to please God through a holy and obedient relationship with Him; 2) persistence: to remain faithful to God and to each other; 3) practice: to care for one's spouse sacrificially as Christ loved and provided for the church; 4) participation: to serve one another as Christ came to serve us and be an example for service; and 5) preparation: to raise one's household according to the principles in God's Word. When we concentrate on doing these things, our marriages will bring glory to God and function properly in life.

In what specific ways in the five areas listed can you practice unity in your marriage?

Question  
# 9

On a day when we honor our mothers, we celebrate God who created a special union and companionship for the crowning achievement of His creation—man and woman. With the institution of marriage, God developed a model and set the standard by which we should live, but sin has marred our ability to live by these standards on our own. Nonetheless, for those of us indwelt by the Holy Spirit we have an obligation to abide by these principles and God-given roles regardless of how society views them.

Men, lead your household by example; don't be an authoritarian dictator, but lead in love and grace. Set aside a quiet time for your family to read Scripture and pray together—even if it means sacrificing something you enjoy. If you're too busy to gather as a family and worship the Lord together, then you're simply too busy. Protect your family spiritually and anticipate the way the enemy attacks; don't be caught off-guard. Set boundaries for you and your family—what you watch on TV, what you search on the Internet, what you listen to on the radio or read in a book. When you set these boundaries, lead by example and follow them yourselves. Create an environment in your home in which you lead by serving your family just as Jesus came to earth not to be served, but to serve ([Mark 10:45](#)). Women, work together with your husbands to create a spiritually wholesome environment in which to raise your family. Complement your husband's role in caring for and nurturing the family in such a way that the focus points to Christ rather than individuals. Help him to establish and maintain the boundaries in your home that will

## *Inspire*

protect you from the spiritual warfare that rages in the society around us. Pray for your husbands daily and cultivate respect in your relationship by complimenting his abilities rather than putting them down as many in society do. Follow your husband's pattern of service. If you have a husband who does not fulfill his God-given duties to lead the house, then continue to represent Christ to him through your love, devotion, service, and respect not only to Christ, but also to him ([1 Peter 3:1](#)). As we have studied about stewardship in the family, the most important point to remember is that we cannot be good stewards if we have not submitted fully to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When we do, though problems may arise, we have an advocate who helps us to respond in a godly manner as we bear the image of Christ in our lives.

## *Incorporate*

What are some practical ways that we can establish boundaries to protect our family from the enemy? These boundaries don't just apply to a set of rules for children, but also husbands and wives so that they may remain faithful and fruitful in their marriages.

## *Incorporate*

What are some practical ways that you can serve one another through marriage? If you are single, anticipate ways that you could serve your future spouse if God has placed it in your heart to get married. As a single, however, remember that marriages require the ability to adapt and change—not your partner, but you. What you write here may be a general overview, but the ways in which you serve your spouse may change depending upon whom God leads you to marry.

How often do you have a family quiet time to pray together, read Scripture, worship, and serve together? If you didn't check every day, what prevents you from spending more time leading your family in devotion unto God?

Daily

Never

Few Times per Week

Few Times Per Month

Few Times Per Year

Why is it so important and beneficial to have a family quiet time? How do you discuss with your children and spouse the lessons that you learn on Sunday from Bible Study and during worship? Why is it important to reinforce what you learn at church in your home?

*May 21, 2017*



# *Stewardship of Faith*

## *Genesis 15:1-21*

Focal Verse:

*"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."*

Genesis 15:6



## Introduce

For some time now, the entire nation had focused on the monumental case being tried in District Court in downtown Fort Worth. Outside the courts building throngs of television crews lined the streets and reporters clamored to get a seat in the tiny courtroom. Hundreds of people waited outside just to catch a glimpse of the high-powered prosecutor along with the talented defense attorney who had never lost a case in his entire career. Inside, the jury, the attorneys along with their clients, and the citizens in the gallery rose to their feet as the judge entered and the bailiff called the court to order.

However, it looked hopeless for the defendant as the evidence had mounted in favor of a guilty verdict. In fact, the well-known defense attorney sat silent as the prosecutor went through charge after charge—enough not only for a life sentence, but also the death penalty. After each witness the prosecutor called, the defense attorney never cross-examined them and always replied, “No questions, your Honor.” For days, the media and the people in the courtroom wondered when this



well-paid and highly trained defender would begin to make his case, but he always sat silently never once rebutting one of the charges.

As the case wound down, the defense attorney stood to give his closing remarks. Standing before the court, and the world for that matter, in his expensive suit with his brilliantly polished shoes, the lawyer baffled

## Introduce

everyone. He began, "The evidence against my client is overwhelming and no one can dispute these charges; he is guilty. He deserves no less than the death penalty." The audience was aghast, but the defendant sat calmly and confidently next to the lawyer. The defense attorney continues amongst audible gasps saying, "However, because of the relationship I have with my client. I will take his place; I will receive his penalty so that he may go free." He concludes, "The defense rests", and with that the judge banged his gavel ending the trial.

No human defense attorney would ever take the penalty of a guilty criminal knowingly, but as our defense attorney Jesus has taken the penalty for our sins which required His death. Because of the relationship we have with Him, the wrath of God was removed from our lives and we have been set free from the bondage of sin. Even through God's covenant with Abram in the Old Testament, not only can we see God's protection and provision, but we can also see how God took our place so that the promise of eternal life that He gives to each of us may be fulfilled.

### Key Question

In what way does God in [Genesis 15](#) serve as a defense attorney and take Abram's place in the covenant?

### Genesis 15:1

#### ***GOD IS OUR PROTECTOR:***

In [Genesis 12](#), we first encounter God's call of Abram and the initial entrance into a covenant with him. Not only did God promise "to show" him a land that would be his inheritance, but also to "make" him "a great nation" ([Gen 12:1](#)). Along the way, he experienced a multitude of problems which caused uncertainty at times, but ultimately led him to grow in his faith and develop in maturity. Each time Abram faced a seemingly insurmountable challenge, God faithfully and graciously rescued His servant. For example, God brought Abram through severe famine in Canaan which forced him to flee to Egypt where he encountered the mighty Pharaoh who had a lustful eye for women ([Gen 12:10-20](#)) as well as during a fearsome battle against an alliance of powerful kings who had taken his nephew, Lot, captive ([Gen 14:1-16](#)). Therefore, **after these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision** to reassure him that He would remain faithful to His covenant and committed to His relationship with His servant ([v. 1](#)).

Despite the physical peril that he faced, perhaps Abram was most troubled by the fact that he had no heir to whom he could pass his inheritance, especially because both he and Sarai were already well advanced in age ([v. 2](#)). In the **vision**, God told Abram to **not be afraid**—in other words stop worrying. Worry on our part indicates a lack of trust in God as well as self-reliance to fix the problem rather than allowing the Lord to work. Self-reliance often only succeeds in creating a larger mess with more problems. Indeed, we later find that this reassurance didn't

## Instruct

stop Abram's worry which led him to act impulsively to have a son, Ishmael, with his wife's servant, Hagar ([Gen 16:1-16](#))—and what a manifold mess of problems this created which continue unto this day. When we trust God and allow Him to guide our steps, we will always have less about which we must worry and more opportunities to testify in praise to Him.



What are some things that worry you? What has happened when you have tried to resolve those issues rather than allowing God to work through you?

Question  
# 1



God gives Abram two reasons **not** to fear: first, God Himself will be his **shield** and second, he shall receive an **exceedingly great reward** ([v. 1](#)). With God as our protector, we have nothing to fear. Certainly, we will encounter trials, troubles, tribulations, and tragedies in this fallen world, but for those of us who have a relationship with Christ we have victory and the **reward** of eternal life. As Jesus proclaims in [Matt 10:28](#), "And do not **fear** those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather **fear** Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." As we have seen, Abram had problems, but

God worked through his life to resolve them; just as He was Abram's **shield**, He will also be our **shield** today (see also [Psalm 84:11](#)). Think about the numerous ways that God has been your Defender and **shield**, protecting you throughout your life. We may have big events through which we can definitively say that God acted as our **shield**, but what about the ordinary, day-to-day events in life? God protects us and our families daily and we may not even pause to take time to notice it.

When we think of the term **reward**, we often think in monetary terms—money for returning a lost wallet or for clues leading to the capture of a fugitive. Here, however, God does not specify that this **reward** consists of a financial blessing. Abram had already been blessed by God with respect to his finances and possessions, but the context here refers to his **descendants** (see [Psalm 127:3](#)). The **exceedingly great reward** is Abram's heritage of faith and trust in the Lord passed down to his **descendants**—which spiritually even includes us! Therefore, Abram's **reward** will consist of the legacy that he leaves and the testimony of his faithfulness passed to successive generations which in the end brings honor and glory to the Lord.

In what ways has God protected you and been your shield and great reward?

Question  
# 2

### **Genesis 15:2-6**

#### ***GOD IS OUR PROVIDER:***

As we have already discovered, Abram is worried that God's plan to "make" him "a great nation" will fail because he has no **heir**. In [verses 2-3](#), he makes his case explicitly by telling God that the only **heir** of his **house**

## Instruct

is a servant from **Damascus** by the name of **Eliezer**. This leads Abram to ask the Lord, “**What will You give me** because I am **childless**.” In his middle 80s, Abram thought his time for having children was rapidly passing so he sought to appoint **Eliezer** his **heir** and successor. Consequently, He laments that God had not yet given him **offspring**—**one born in his own house**—as an **heir**. Even after Abram had seen God provide for him time after time, it had not yet sunk in that He would provide for him in this instance too. How many times are we like Abram and look at our overwhelming circumstances and our own abilities and lose hope? Yet, we have a Provider who can do the impossible and One who will never fail if only we would trust in Him!



Once again, **the word of the Lord** comes to Abram to reassure him that He would indeed provide an **heir** and fulfill His promise ([v. 4](#)). God states emphatically that **Eliezer will not be the heir**, but **one who would come from his own body**. Approximately fourteen years later, when Abraham turns 100, God fulfills His promise and Isaac is born unto him and Sarah ([Gen 21:5](#)). God demonstrates Abram’s **exceedingly great reward** through a metaphor which describes how many **descendants** there will be. God instructs him to go **outside** and peer into the **heavens** ([v. 5](#)). As Abram gazes into the **heavens**, God tells him to **count the stars if it’s possible**; then the Lord declares **so shall** the number of **your descendants be**.

In what ways has God provided for you?

Question  
# 3

Scripture notes that Abram **believed God and He accredited it to him as righteousness** ([v. 6](#)). Like salvation in the New Testament, the relationship was initiated by God and Abram only had to accept the gift that was offered unto him. He did nothing to earn salvation, but rather simply displayed his trust in God alone. God found Abram faithful not because he was righteous by his own merits, but because he trusted in the only One who is holy, righteous, and good. Abram's response was generally one of faith; even though **he believed God** along the way he had concerns and at points stumbled in his faith. However, Abram can be considered righteous because he had a pattern established of trusting in God so that when he failed in his human weakness he could seek restoration with the Lord and learn from his mistakes so that he could continue to be transformed daily to the image of God's holiness ([Lev 19:2](#)). Likewise, when we have a relationship with Jesus Christ we need to establish a track record of faith not to inherit eternal life, but so that we can grow in our walk with the Lord and we can keep the moments of human weakness to a minimum.

In what ways have you displayed your trust/belief in God? What valuable lessons has God taught you when you stumbled along the way?

Question  
# 4

### **GOD FULFILLS HIS PROMISES:**

God begins by reminding Abram how He had **brought** him **out of Ur of the Chaldeans** safely to the land of Canaan ([v. 7](#)). God had called him to leave his ancestral home where many gods were worshiped and to go to a **land** that He would show him; on the journey God both provided for and protected him. With a sincere heart, not doubting, Abram asks God

**how he shall know** that he **will inherit** that **land** ([v. 8](#)). Often, we see this question as doubt, but in reality Abram is processing the information because he still has no offspring. Think of it in terms of



Mary in the New Testament when she learns of her pregnancy and she postulates, “How can this be, since I do not know a man” ([Luke 1:34](#)). Mary isn’t doubting the news from God, but simply trying to process it in terms of her human understanding of biology. Similarly, it’s as if Abram is asking, “How will this happen as I am old?” When we sincerely try to process information according to our human understanding, God does not consider this doubt nor does He become angry. However, if we doubt and test God by demanding a sign, this constitutes sinful unbelief—which neither Abram nor Mary show in their questions.

What is the difference between asking a question for understanding and asking a question to test God? **Question # 5**



God responds with a visual for Abram to illustrate His commitment, so He requests several animals to be used as sacrifices. He requires three animals that are **three-years-old**: a **heifer**, a **female goat**, and a **ram** ([v. 9](#)). For the other two, a **turtledove** and **young pigeon**, He doesn't specify the ages. Essentially, these animals foreshadow the sacrificial system and represent the animals that would be used as sacrifices under the Levitical law. In this instance, each of the animals, except for the **birds**, were **cut** into two halves and each piece of the animal laid separated on the ground, leaving a space to walk in the middle ([v. 10](#)). This scene of death will become an illustration of how God Himself will take on the oath of the covenant and make sure that it succeeds. (This will become more obvious when we study [verse 17](#) so we will only make this brief remark here.) As the sun began to set, **vultures** began to descend upon the **carcasses**, but Abram remained vigilant and drove them away ([v. 11](#)). Like Adam whom we studied last week, Abram's main responsibility was to protect his family and pass on to them a legacy of faith in the Lord. The **vultures**, therefore, likely represent the foreign nations, such as those in [Gen 14](#), who attack Abram and his descendants—Israel; thus, Abram and the patriarchs serve as protector of his progeny.

### ***Genesis 15:12-16***

#### ***GOD PRESERVES US:***

As the **sun** set, Abram **fell** into **a deep sleep and horror and a great darkness fell upon him** ([v. 12](#)). This begins the second night of Abram's interaction with the Lord. Again, Abram, just as in [v. 1](#), responds to the Lord with fear. In this case, just as in [verse 1](#), fear has the connotation of

## Instruct

being afraid of the unknown. This time, however, God doesn't command Abram to stop fearing, but rather He immediately begins to foretell the future to His servant. God outlines the next **four hundred years** of history for Abram's **descendants**. Although here God isn't specific in terms of identifying the **nation**, He does note that Abram's **descendants will be strangers in a land** and **serve** the people there for **four hundred years** ([v. 13](#)). God further explains that He will **judge** that **nation** and Abram's **descendants will come out with great possessions** ([v. 14](#)). From history, we know this to be Egypt and God did indeed **judge** them through plagues and ultimately through the defeat of their military at the Red Sea ([Exod 7-14](#)). The people also left enriched from the Egyptians ([Exod 12:36](#)). **In the fourth generation**, they would return, under the leadership of Joshua, to inherit the Promised Land ([v. 16](#)). As for Abram, God explains that he will have a blessed life and **be buried at an old age** ([v. 15](#)).



In all Scripture, God never promises us a life free from problems or persecution—in fact Jesus does say that those who follow Him will often have difficulties ([John 15:18-20](#))—but the Lord does promise to help us persevere in times of trouble. Abram never saw the complete fulfillment of God's promise to give him the land—that occurred during the time of Joshua and Caleb—but he had a greater reward to which he could look

forward, life with God in heaven. No matter whatever may happen to us here on earth, we have security and salvation through Jesus from which no one or nothing can separate us. We often see God's preservation in terms of the physical—seeing us through an illness, rescuing us from some type of physical danger, providing for our needs, or even overseeing our finances. Certainly, God does orchestrate events to His glory and our benefit, but if we go through a difficult time it doesn't mean God has abandoned us and we have failed. When we go through difficult times, we need to look beyond our circumstances to God's goal for our lives—eternal life. Peter shares this same outlook in [1 Peter 1:5](#) when he describes how those “who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” God preserved Abram's **descendants** even though they faced peril in Egypt, but ultimately they had a greater reward to which they could look forward.

As you look back on your life, in what ways have you seen the hand of God's preservation?

Question  
# 6

### [Genesis 15:17-21](#)

#### ***GOD TAKES OUR PLACE:***

After the **sun went down**, God appeared in Abram's **vision** as a **smoking oven** and **burning torch** ([v. 17](#)). As these two symbols, God passes through the animals that had been cut into two pieces in [verse 10](#). According to tradition, both individuals making a covenant would pass through these slain animals to symbolize the binding nature of their commitment. If either party broke their promise, they would encounter

## Instruct

the same fate as these halved animals—death. Extraordinarily, however, in this vision only God in the form of a **smoking oven and burning torch** passes through these sacrifices; Abram, the other party of the covenant, does not. In essence, God is telling Abram that if he fails at any part of the covenant that He Himself would take the responsibility and pay the penalty—in other words, God would die for Abram and his **descendants**. Indeed, Abram does fail, like all those before him and all those after him, so God had to pay the penalty of our transgressing the covenant. Approximately 2,000 years later, God by sending His Son Jesus did pay the penalty for the broken promises of this covenant. Jesus, who is God, took our place on the cross paying the penalty for our sin so that we might have life and through Him fulfill our part of the bargain. Recounting the story, the text continues to say that **on the same day that the Lord made the covenant with Abram**, He specified the extent of the **land** that he would give to his **descendants** as well—**from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates** ([v. 18](#)). The main thrust of this covenant, however, is not about the land, but about the inability of man to fulfill his end of the covenant so that God would pay our penalty so that we would still be able to have a relationship with Him!

Why must God/Jesus take our place for our failure?

Question  
# 7

In the beginning of this lesson, we encountered a courtroom where the defense attorney took the place of the defendant. The defendant in that illustration had violated several contracts (i.e. covenants) and was being charged with a crime for breaking his agreement. When we think about contracts, we envision long, wordy rules that we cannot understand or for the mere fact of laziness we simply don't want to read them because they are long. These contracts usually spell out the boundaries by which we should abide as well as the penalties for breaking them. Abram's, and our covenant, with God differs from typical human contracts because it is simple and straightforward. Abram, and by extension we, have one primary responsibility in the contract—trust God. God has taken our penalty and given us a way to have eternal life, so all we must do is confess and turn from our sin so that we might accept the gift of God's grace finished on the cross. It's that simple. Even though trials and tribulations may come, we need to remain faithful to the Lord and be grateful for His protection and provision for us. Part of our stewardship of faith then is to tell others about the things that God has done for us and be equipped and ready when the opportunity to share the gospel arises. How often do you share how God has saved you and sustained you? To be a good steward, the testimony of God's covenant with us through Jesus Christ must be on our lips daily—ready to give Him honor and glory for what He has done.

## *Incorporate*

Spend time in prayer this week thanking God for being your Protector and Provider. List some specific situations where God has sustained you. How can you use these areas to witness to others and share the gospel?

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As you pray, ask God to help you recall some of the promises that He has made to you and how He has fulfilled them. Write some of the instances here so that you can praise God for His faithfulness.

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Why is it important during the difficult times in life for you to focus on God's preservation through salvation rather than the circumstances? How does this help to give you hope and something to which you can look forward?

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*May 28, 2017*



# *Stewardship of Forgiveness*

## *Genesis 45:1-15*

Focal Verse:

"But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life."

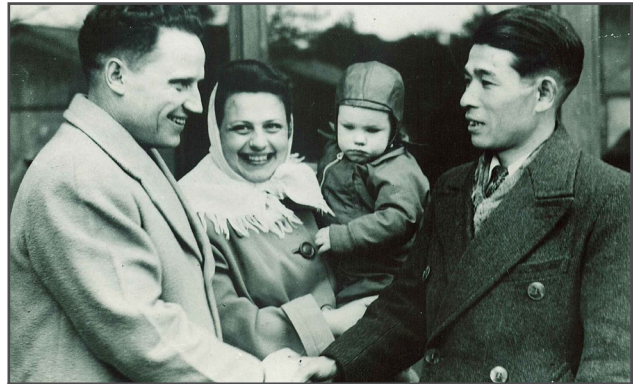
Genesis 45:5



## Introduce

The Sunday morning of December 7, 1941 on the island of Oahu began as any other typical day in paradise, but the relaxing sounds of the surf crashing upon the shore and the trade winds blowing gently through the palm trees would soon be replaced by the drone of kamikaze fighter jets and the whizzing of bullets along with the explosion of torpedoes. The Japanese attack on the Pacific Fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor had propelled the US into World War II. Amongst the carnage and destruction, 2,335 people, including 68 civilians, perished with a staggering 1,143 wounded. This sudden and unprovoked attack angered many Americans who began to enlist in the Armed Forces to enact revenge upon the Empire of Japan. Stationed on an army base in California at the time of the attack, Jacob DeShazer was one such American who wanted revenge and one month

later volunteered to participate in the Doolittle Raid against Tokyo. From the aircraft carrier the USS Hornet, bombers launched their assault earlier than planned because they had been spotted in the South Pacific. Consequently, the bombers flew their mission despite knowing that they did not



*DeShazer and his family witness to one of his captors.*

have enough fuel to reach the secure airbases in China; in fact, calculations predicted that they would barely have enough fuel to take them near the Chinese mainland which at the time was occupied by Japanese forces. Nonetheless, because of his animosity toward the Japanese people,

## Introduce

DeShazer flew his mission. After parachuting to safety when his plane ran out of fuel, he was subsequently captured and spent nearly three-and-a-half years imprisoned—much of it in solitary confinement. DeShazer recalls, “We were imprisoned and beaten, half-starved, [and] terribly tortured.”

For two years in this POW camp, DeShazer’s hatred and bitterness for the Japanese people nearly drove him to the point of insanity, but then a radical change occurred in his life. After receiving a copy of the Bible, he began to read voraciously from cover to cover. As he read about the crucifixion, Jesus’ radical act of love and forgiveness in [Luke 23:34](#) stuck with him: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do,” Jesus exclaims. After surrendering his life to Jesus, DeShazer remembers, “And now, from the depths of my heart, I too prayed for God to forgive my torturers, and I determined by the aid of Christ to do my best to acquaint these people with the message of salvation that they might become as other believing Christians.”

Indeed, Jacob DeShazer did return to Japan as a missionary and actively shared the gospel

with his captors. He personally sought to meet the guards who tortured him so that he could extend his forgiveness and the love of Christ. In addition, he also had pamphlets translating his story into Japanese which he would distribute throughout Tokyo. By divine appointment, he handed



*DeShazer and Fuchida discuss the Bible.*

a pamphlet to Mitsuo Fuchida who was exiting at a subway station to serve as a witness in General Douglas MacArthur's war crimes tribunal against Japanese leaders. Fuchida had led the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 as the most experienced pilot and by his own testimony was elated to destroy the US; however, he stuck the pamphlet in his pocket and determined to read it later. When he began reading the pamphlet, Fuchida was amazed with the transformation and forgiveness in DeShazer's life and he also surrendered his life to Christ.

Forgiveness is a powerful tool in our lives. Not only does it keep us from insanity because of the bitterness and resentment we harbor, constantly seeking revenge, but it also helps us to demonstrate the love of Christ to our friends, family members, co-workers, and members of the community. This week we will examine another act of forgiveness that God used to bring reconciliation to a dysfunctional family and provide for them during a difficult time. Joseph, despite all the things that his brothers had done to him, extended forgiveness to his family and allowed God to work through him to bring restoration and healing.

Key  
Question

Why is it important to forgive?

### ***In Reference***



*To read their own testimonies, see their pamphlets [From Pearl Harbor to Calvary](#) (Mitsuo Fuchida) and [I was a Prisoner of Japan](#) (Jacob DeShazer).*

### Genesis 45:1-2

#### **DECLARE FORGIVENESS:**

[Genesis 45](#) picks up toward the end of Joseph’s long, arduous journey from a dysfunctional family in Canaan whose brothers had sold him into slavery in Egypt where he experienced the lows of being imprisoned falsely on accusations of sexual impropriety with Potiphar’s wife to the highs of being promoted to second in command in all the country.

Allowing God to guide him and remaining faithful to give Him the glory, Joseph correctly interpreted Pharaoh’s dream in which there would be seven good years of bountiful harvest followed by seven bad years in which famine would destitute the entire Middle East. Consequently, because Joseph accurately interpreted the dream, Pharaoh had him released from prison and promoted to a position which oversaw the collection and distribution of food so that the nation could survive. After

**two years** (see [v. 6](#)), the famine had reached Joseph’s family in Canaan, so Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy food—not knowing that they would be interacting with their brother whom they had not seen since he was seventeen. Throughout their first meeting

with Joseph, they did not recognize their brother nor did he reveal himself to them—but things were about to change because Joseph could no longer restrain himself from hiding his identity to them ([Gen 45:1](#)).



Barely able to control his emotions, Joseph sent everyone from the room except for his **brothers** because he wanted privacy to **make himself known** to them. Although the forgiveness and reconciliation occurred in private, as **he wept aloud** the **Egyptians** nearby and those in **the house of Pharaoh heard it** ([v. 2](#)). Through Joseph's act of forgiveness, we can learn two important principles. First, unless an offense was committed publicly, forgiveness and reconciliation should be conducted in private. This gives both parties time and space to work through their emotions without interference from others. When we try to reconcile in public, often a crowd will influence the outcome because no one wants to look weak or be labeled as wrong.

Reconciliation should also be in person as much as possible—not through social media or texting. Today, we have a problem with airing our private differences as well as friend and family dysfunction online for all to see; we have no discretion or filter. Facebook, texting, or any kind of social media is no place for us to conduct personal matters that involve other individuals—especially if it involves something which could damage another's reputation or even cause further harm to a relationship. Think before you post! In [Gen 45](#), Joseph wasn't concerned with how others would view him as much as he was with his brothers truly understanding his heart and demonstrating how God had changed him, not just over the many years, but also since they had begun to request food. Understanding one's heart cannot be effectively done online in most cases because words can be misconstrued, one's tone of voice cannot be heard, and one's body language and posture cannot be seen. Ask for forgiveness in person as much as possible.

## In-Depth Information



Pharaoh promoted Joseph as second in command of Egypt at the age of thirty ([Gen 41:46](#)). Therefore, when his brothers came to request food he was around thirty-nine (seven years of bounty had elapsed in addition to the two years of the famine).

Why is it important to reconcile your differences in private and in person?

Question  
# 1

Second, we should be intentional in our declaration of forgiveness—**Joseph made himself known** ([v. 1](#)). As any person would, Joseph undoubtedly struggled with bitterness and animosity toward his brothers for what they had done and indeed his brothers also dealt with remorse and regret ([Gen 42:21-23](#)); yet, God transformed Joseph and allowed him to see the bigger picture of why he had been sent to Egypt which allowed him to forgive his brothers fully. Nonetheless, even in the first encounter with them, Joseph likely still struggled with revenge and forgiveness because he “spoke roughly to them” ([Gen 42:7](#)) and even had them imprisoned for three days ([Gen 42:17](#)) and made one remain in prison until they returned with his younger brother, Benjamin ([Gen 42:19-20](#)). Joseph could have continued



to treat his brothers with contempt and repay them with the same type of suffering that he himself had experienced, but he remembered God's plan for his family ([Gen 42:9](#)). God's plan for us is that we extend forgiveness and reconciliation to others just as He has done for us ([Eph 4:32](#)). Even if others reject the forgiveness we offer, we still have followed God's plan and His example through Christ—whose forgiveness is oft rejected by people even today. We must consciously make an effort not only to forgive others, but also to ask for forgiveness for our own faults—otherwise we will become mired in a vicious, never-ending cycle of revenge and guilt which ultimately robs us of our joy and distracts us from focusing on God's plan for our lives.

Why must we be intentional both to forgive and ask for forgiveness? Why is it important to communicate clearly during reconciliation?

Question  
# 2

### Genesis 45:3-8

#### **DISARM ANY APPREHENSION:**

After Joseph sent everyone from the room, he presumably began to speak directly to his brothers in Hebrew because he would have no longer used an interpreter ([Gen 42:23](#)). He begins by revealing his identity: **I am Joseph** and for a second time seeks reassurance that his **father**, Jacob, **still lives** ([v. 3](#)). Confused, the brothers don't know what to think so Joseph bids them to **come near** and reveals to them a fact that only he and they

**HOLDING A GRUDGE  
DOESN'T MAKE YOU  
STRONG; IT MAKES  
YOU BITTER.  
FORGIVING DOESN'T  
MAKE YOU WEAK; IT  
SETS YOU FREE.**

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would know: **I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt (v. 4)**. This fact could have startled the brothers because Joseph being in a position of power could have done anything to them that he had desired; instead, Joseph takes immediate steps to disarm any apprehension that they may have.

Joseph urges his brothers **not to be grieved** or be **angry with** themselves; he then immediately deflects attention from them and himself to God. Instead of gloating over them and reminding them of the dream in which they bowed down to him—which had now come true—Joseph explains how **God** had **sent** him to Egypt to **preserve life (v. 5)**. Three times in [verses 5, 7, and 8](#) Joseph focuses on God’s divine plan in sending him to Egypt in which he finally states **it was not you who sent me here, but God (v. 8)**. Through his experience, Joseph had come to realize the nature of God’s plan. God had made a promise to his forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) to multiply their descendants and make them numerous—and a **famine** wouldn’t stop the fulfillment of that promise. Only **two years** of the seven had elapsed and the **famine** would become so severe that it would be futile to even plant and harvest for nothing would grow [\(v. 6\)](#). Therefore, God in His wisdom **sent Joseph to preserve a posterity** (i.e. descendants) **for** them and to **save their lives (v. 7)**. For this reason, God raised Joseph from prison to serve as **a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt (v. 8)**. When involved in reconciliation, we always need to approach it with prayer and humility so that we maintain focus on God rather than the problem or issue of contention. When we focus on God, we will have the right perspective



even if the other party doesn't and we will know how to move forward without becoming ensnared in bitterness and animosity.

### ***In-Depth Information***



In [verse 8](#), Joseph declares that God **has made** him **a father to Pharaoh**. Simply, he is saying that God has made him an advisor to Pharaoh—nothing more than that. A father gives advice to his children so Joseph has given advice to the Pharaoh about his dream and the ensuing famine.

Why is it important to approach reconciliation by focusing on God and His plan?

Question  
# 3

Immediately after revealing himself to his brothers, Joseph took specific steps to disarm them of any apprehension they may have had. As humans, many of us when dealing with reconciliation often wonder two things: 1) is the other party sincere in his/her apology/beliefs and 2) what are his/her motives for what he/she is saying or doing. We often approach reconciliation and forgiveness with a healthy amount of skepticism, especially because we know the background of the problem from our own perspective. Here, Joseph touched on the problem briefly and then immediately began to explain the bigger picture which focused on God. We ought not dwell on a problem and beat it to death because this will lead to more problems down the road—we need to seek forgiveness for a specific issue and move on. Problems will mount if every time we see the people who have sought forgiveness we remind them of what they have done or if we treat them with skepticism as if

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they weren't sincere in their apology. Moreover, we ought to take steps to demonstrate our sincerity (which we will discuss in [45:14-15](#)) and tell how God has helped us to overcome our own struggle with the issue. By focusing on God, He not only receives the glory but many times it helps to diffuse the situation because we are not thinking in terms of our earthly perspective; rather we are seeing others through the eyes of Christ and relying on the Holy Spirit to guide us.

In what way can we disarm any apprehension when reconciling with someone?

Question  
# 4

## Genesis 45:9-13

### DETERMINE TO REUNITE:

Although Jacob and Benjamin had nothing to do with this squabble between Joseph and his brothers, Joseph was determined to reunite his fractured and dysfunctional family. He instructs his brothers to **hurry** to bring his **father**, Jacob, and the rest of their families to **Egypt** ([v. 9](#)). In an act of benevolence and kindness, Joseph tells his brothers they will **live in the land of Goshen** along with their families and livestock so that they may be **near** to him ([v. 10](#)). While in **Goshen**, Joseph



**will provide** for them so that they should **not come to poverty** (i.e. be devastated physically) by the **famine** which still has **five years** remaining

(v. 11). Joseph reiterates to his brothers that **it is his mouth that speaks to** them—in other words, he is speaking to them in Hebrew as their brother not a foreign official in Egypt. Once again, he bids them to **tell** his **father** of **all his glory in Egypt** and to **bring** him **down** there quickly (vv. 12-13).

Joseph understood what a family should be and he knew that along the way they would encounter problems, but he didn't dwell on past failures; instead, he recognized God's plan and implemented it to bring unity and restoration to his whole family. Not only did Joseph reconcile with his brothers who betrayed him, but also, he was able to reunite with his father and younger brother. In addition, it helped his brothers to forgive themselves and not to live in guilt, but also to be reconciled with their father. Brokenness and dysfunction don't merely hurt the family members involved; it hurts the entire family. Consequently, we need to look at the bigger picture of what a family is and how it acts in Christ so that we may be united together to accomplish the purpose to which God has called us.

How does an unwillingness to forgive affect the entire family? In what ways, can forgiveness help us to unite our families and see God's plan for them?

Question  
# 5

### ***Genesis 45:14-15***

#### ***DEMONSTRATE FORGIVENESS:***

The demonstration of Joseph's forgiveness begins in the previous section (45:9-13) where he offered land to them so that they could live **near** him and he could **provide** for them. He demonstrates his forgiveness by

## Instruct

bringing the whole family together from his father to his brothers who had wronged him so many years ago. In this section, he continues to demonstrate forgiveness by showing affection to his brothers ([45:14-15](#)). First, he reconciles with Benjamin to whom he was closest because they shared the same mother, Rachel. He **fell on Benjamin's neck**



(i.e. he embraced or hugged him) and then they both began to weep ([v. 14](#)). Second, he displayed forgiveness by **kissing all his brothers** and weeping openly as they **talked** ([v. 15](#)). Forgiveness should always be accompanied by action. This can be clearly seen in salvation; if we confess our sins, but we never turn from them and continue to live a lifestyle of continual sin then it demonstrates that we aren't truly sorry for the wrong choices that we have made. Thus, confession and repentance (i.e. turning from one's sin) go hand in hand. In the same way with our human relationships, there must be a visible change or expression of remorse and forgiveness so that one may judge the sincerity of the other's words accurately.

Why is it important to demonstrate forgiveness and not merely express it through words?  
What are some ways either you have or can demonstrate forgiveness to others?

Question  
# 6

Because we are dealing with other human beings, not every situation in which reconciliation is attempted will work out like that in the case of Joseph and his brothers. If both parties have a relationship with Christ and they are actively seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance, then reconciliation can truly occur; often, however, one if not both parties are not truly seeking God's guidance and they are focused on their own circumstances and, in some cases, revenge. Lack of forgiveness, however, shouldn't be a roadblock in our lives, but rather we need to submit it into the hands of God and allow Him to take care of it. We need to do our part in seeking reconciliation, but we also must be reminded that we have no control over the acceptance of the other person(s) involved. Truly it's hard for us to forgive and forget, but we need to seek forgiveness and then do our part to move forward in the relationship in Christ.

Therefore, as Christians we must be willing to seek forgiveness from others even if we think that we've done nothing wrong. Like Joseph, and Jacob DeShazer in the introduction, we need to initiate forgiveness and allow God to work in the hearts of the other individuals. Too often, we keep grudges and we want the other party to make the first move; this leads to years of avoidance and bitterness. In addition, we need to demonstrate our forgiveness toward another person—not in an overbearing way which dominates the relationship and causes awkwardness, but in such a way that Christ is glorified. Forgiveness doesn't mean that we are indebted to another person nor does it mean that we constantly remind them of how sorry we are, but rather we learn from our mistakes and continue our journey demonstrating to others

how much Christ has changed us. Above all, if the person refuses to forgive us, we cannot force them—just like Jesus doesn't force those who reject Him. We simply continue to show them the love of Christ and turn the work of reconciliation over to Him! As we demonstrate love and refuse to hold grudges or display bitterness, often people will be impacted in such a way that they are drawn to Christ and they will either begin a relationship or be reconciled to Him so that they may also continue their journey of faith—growing from their past mistakes.

***Incorporate***

Are there any relationships in your life where you have not attempted to be reconciled with someone from past differences? Write their name(s) here—only you will see this unless you want someone to pray for you on your journey of reconciliation and share it with them.

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How has the inability to reconcile affected: 1) your relationship with that individual, 2) your relationship in your family, and 3) your relationship in your church family? If you don't currently have someone with whom you need forgiveness and reconciliation, then list ways in the past that this has affected these relationships.

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## ***Incorporate***

What other Scriptures can you list that talk about reconciliation and forgiveness? Pray and ask God to help you list some of them here. If you can't think of any, use your concordance at the back of your Bible to look up passages on forgive/forgiveness or use any online resource like [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org).

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Finally, in what ways can you demonstrate forgiveness and reconciliation to others so that Christ may be glorified and others can see the bigger plan that He has not only for your life but also for theirs?

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***Journal: Document God's Work***

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