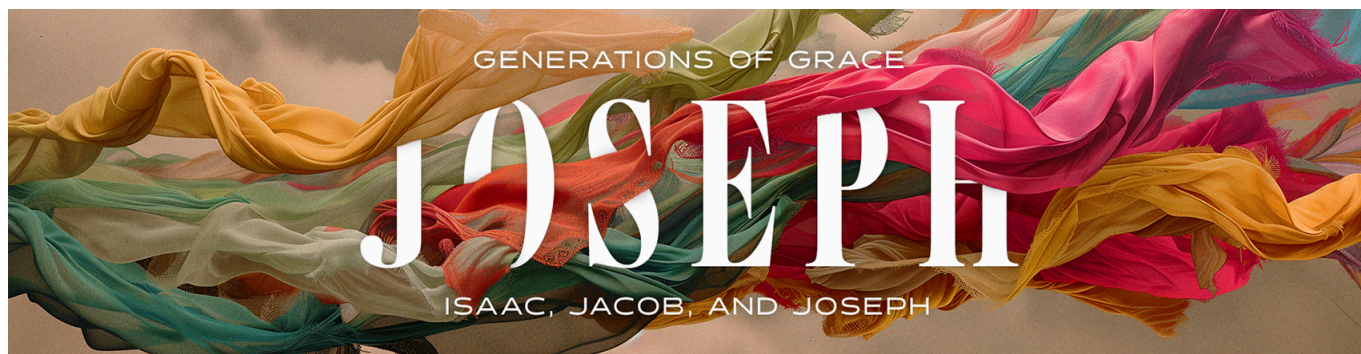




Genesis Part III (Week 2/8) The Promise-Keeping God

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *Knowing God's unchanging promise, presence, and purpose in Christ - what is one specific step you will take this week, and how can the group support you in taking it?*

Warm-Up

1. Have you seen someone steal something and reap benefits from it? How did it make you feel?

Read Genesis 27:41-45

2. What is Jacob's history of deception? How does he steal his father's blessing from Esau?
3. Why is Jacob fleeing to Harran?
4. What are your impressions of Jacob?
5. Who do you think God can use for his purposes? How does God's choice of Jacob, shape your understanding of how God can use?

Read Genesis 28:10-22

6. Why did Jacob stop at this particular place? What do you think would be weighing on his mind?
7. What does Jacob see in the dream? How might this sight be comforting *and* terrifying?
8. What is the significance that the stairway reaches from heaven to earth? How is it the opposite of the tower of Babel incident (cf. Genesis 11:1-9)?
9. How does the Lord reveal himself to Jacob? What are the promises the Lord makes again?
10. What is Jacob's response (see v.16)? Which places in your life, as you most likely to ignore or be unaware of the Lord's presence? Have you ever had a moment of realisation of the Lord's presence?
11. Why does the Lord appear to Jacob? How is it not dependent on what he has done?
12. When has the Lord appeared to you, when you've not been looking for him? Who could you be praying for, that they too would meet the Lord?
13. What are the promises the Lord makes to Jacob? How do they concern people beyond Jacob's family?
14. Are your prayers mostly focused on your needs, or God's promises for the world? What would help shaping your prayers, in line with God's promises?
15. Read John 1:51. How does Jesus Christ ultimately fulfil God's promises and his presence with us?

Apply *When are you most likely to forget the Lord's presence? What would most help (e.g., rhythm, habit, practice, prayer) to remember the Lord's presence with you?*

Pray *Gracious Father, thank you that your promises are not dependent on us. Help us to see your commitment, promises, and presence with us most fully in Christ. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

GOING DEEPER

Genesis Part III (Week 2/8) The Promise-Keeping God

Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Frontline this Week

As we enter the last quarter of the year, how might you best serve God in this season?

For Families

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* "If God Will Be With Me ..." by Rico Tice:
https://www.allsouls.org/Groups/278649/A124_The_God_of_Jacob.aspx?show_media=172850&show_file=184838
- *Listen (sermon):* "The Beginning of Election" by Richard Trist:
https://www.allsouls.org/Groups/139410/A062_Beginnings.aspx?show_media=144590&show_file=155769
- *Listen (sermon):* "God's Rule and Grace" by William Taylor:
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/53885/>
- *Listen (sermon):* "The Wilderness Years" by Peter Wilkinson:
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/the-wilderness-years/#sermons>
- *Read (book):* "God's Rascal: The Jacob Narrative in Genesis 25-35"
<https://www.amazon.com.au/Gods-Rascal-Jacob-Narrative-Genesis/dp/152710897X>
- *Watch (lesson):* "Jacob at the Gate of Heaven" by Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/classroom/jacob/sessions/12>

Series Resources

- *Read:* "Genesis" by Derek Kidner. 
- *Read:* "Genesis for Everyone: Part 2" by John Goldingay. 
- *Read:* "How to Read Genesis" by Tremper Longman III
- *Read:* "Genesis: Story of God Bible Commentary" by Tremper Longman III
- *Watch:* "Genesis 12-50" by the Bible Project:
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/genesis-12-50>
- *Watch:* "How should we read the Old Testament?" by Dan Paterson:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJtba-JyPVg>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

GENESIS III: Generations of Grace
Week 02/08 “The Promise-Keeping God”
by Amy Norman (11/10/2026)

약속을 지키시는 하나님 | 信守应许的上帝 | வாக்குத்தத்தத்தைக் காக்கும் தேவன்

Bible Passage: Genesis 28:10-22

*Gracious Father, thank you that your promises are not dependent on us.
As we come to your Word, help us to see your commitment and your faithfulness.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

- As we come to Genesis, we're focusing on generations of grace.
Generations of God's chosen people.
We did a whole series on Abraham,
last week considered his son Isaac,
and today we come to Isaac's son, Jacob.
- Jacob's name *immediately* gives us a clue to what we can expect from Abraham's grandson.
Jacob literally means “he grasps the heel”,
describing how he was born grasping the heel of his older twin brother.
But in the original language “heel” sounds very similar to word “deceive”.
- This wasn't just a poorly planned name,
with an unfortunate alternate meaning,
but it perfectly fits how Jacob behaves.
He both “grasps the heel” *and* “he deceives”.
- Early in his life, Jacob swindles his brother out of his birthright,
and this pattern of deception for his own benefit *is repeated* throughout his life.
Abraham and Isaac's heir is a deceiver.
- As we get to this generation, we might be rightly wondering:
Will Jacob's schemes and deception get in the way of the promises of God?
Or are God's promises *only as good* at the people he makes them to?
- As we look closely at just some of Jacob's schemes, we can be left questioning:

Why does God use such broken people? *And* can God use us?

- As we come to part of Jacob's story in chapter 28, we will see in fact:

The Lord's commitment to his people,

The Lord's presence, and

The Lord's promises.

3

THE LORD'S COMMITMENT TO HIS PEOPLE | 27:41-46

주의 백성을 향한 하나님의 신실하심 | 主对祂子民的委身 | தம் மக்களுக்காக உறுதியுடன் நிற்கும் ஆண்டவர்

First, despite the character and actions of Jacob, we see

the Lord's commitment to his people.

- In chapter 28, we meet Jacob as he has just left his family and is on his way to Harran. Jacob is leaving the very land the Lord promised to Abraham and to Isaac. Harran, nearly 900km away, is the place where God called Abraham *to leave*.
- *Why is Jacob on this journey back?* Partly (we're told) he goes back to find a wife, but also he is fleeing from the mess he has created.
- *If we turn back to chapter 27, we see what Jacob is running from. Chapter 27, from verse 41 ...*

Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is planning to avenge himself by killing you. Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Harran. Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I'll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?" *Genesis 27:41-45*

4

- Jacob is living up to his name.
He deceived his father, impersonated Esau, and stole his blessing.
No wonder Esau is filled with murderous rage.
- This family is *meant* to bring blessings to the nations,
but so far Jacob has only stoked anger and revenge. /
- Even though Jacob deceived his father Isaac,
when Jacob is urged by his mother to flee to Haran,
Isaac passes on the blessing given to him by the Lord.
- Before Jacob leaves Isaac prays that God *may* bless Jacob,
make him fruitful and increase his numbers to become a community of people,
that God *may* give Jacob and his descendants the blessing given to Abraham,
so that Jacob *may* take possession of the land, which God gave to Abraham.
- This is Isaac's prayer – but will God keep these promises *for Jacob*?
Will the man who has deceived his father and usurped his brother
be blessed and used by the Lord? /
- Maybe you haven't impersonated your brother to steal your father's blessings,
but there are plenty of our own actions and thoughts that can leave us wondering:

5

have I stepped over the line? Because of this thing I have done, will the Lord abandon me?

- A key feature of Jacob's life is that he was chosen by God for *his plans* >
even before Jacob was born.
- As it says in Romans, chapter 9:

Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger."

Romans 9:11-12

- Before Jacob has done *anything* good or bad,
he was chosen by God.
The promises weren't given based on his merit to begin with!
- God was not blindsided by Jacob's character or his actions,
and God is not blindsided by ours either!
So how encouraging it should be for us,
that God chooses to work out his purposes *even through sinful people!*
- The Lord is committed to his people.
That doesn't mean he turns a blind eye to sin. The Lord is still the judge.
But his promises and his commitment are not fickle
or dependent on us holding up our side of the bargain.

6

- We might be put off by Jacob's scheming or encouraged that he uses such people, but ultimately as we read through the Genesis, we should keep our eyes on how *the Lord* graciously responds.

THE LORD'S PRESENCE | 28:12-17

주님의 임재 | 主的同在 | ஆண்டவரின் பிரசன்னம்

Second, as we return to Jacob fleeing to Harran, we come to see **the Lord's presence** with him. *Let's come back to chapter 28, from verse 10 ...*

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. 28:10-13a

- It seems like Jacob has fled with very little. He even has to use a stone as a pillow. He comes to a place and only stops there because it is dark.
- This would not have been a very peaceful night in the country. Behind Jacob is his raging brother, one who has many more skills in hunting. Surely Jacob must be wondering: *Is his brother following him? Will he catch him soon?* It's not hard to imagine Jacob feeling scared, isolated, and completely vulnerable.
- Up to this point, there has been only one mention of Jacob's relationship with the Lord. It's not a good one! Jacob's only just used the Lord's name to help deceive his father,

and even then, he refers to the Lord as *your God – Isaac’s God*.
And so this makes what happens next *even more* remarkable.

- In this nondescript place, the Lord appears to Jacob.
- In a dream he sees a stairway,
that stretches from the earth to heaven,
and angels of God are ascending and descending on it.
- And the Lord is there.
- We might be somewhat more familiar with these visions of angels after
looking at Ezekiel’s vision, but such dreams,
where people get a glimpse of the spiritual reality *are far from normal!*
- The Lord appeared and spoke with both Abraham and Isaac,
but neither are described like this,
accompanied with a vision of angels moving up and down from heaven. /
- Immediately it is clear that Jacob is not alone.
Even in this seemingly random place he stopped for the night,
there are many angels doing the will of the Lord.
- This stairway or ramp up to heaven is like the very opposite of the tower of Babel.
Earlier in the book of Genesis, humans attempted to build a tower that reached heaven
(and failed).

9

- Instead of humans reaching up to heaven,
Jacob is shown it is the Lord who has come down.
- The Lord is there, above the stairway
or your Bible might have a footnote to say he is there *beside him*.
The same word can be translated in both ways.
Either way, the Lord is close to Jacob,
close enough to speak directly to him.
- He reveals to Jacob:
“I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.”
- The Lord uses his personal name Yahweh to reveal himself to Jacob.
He is not just any god, like the gods of the surrounding nations,
but he is the Lord, the God of his father Abraham and the God of Isaac.
- He is the one who has *already* blessed and protected his family.
The Lord has directed where they should go and when they should stay,
and *now* the Lord seeks out Jacob too.
- Jacob has not gone looking for the Lord – *especially after all that has just happened*,
but the Lord chooses to appear to Jacob in this remarkable way –
even when he is on the run.

10

- Interestingly, the Lord doesn't address Jacob's recent behaviour but affirms that he is the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac.
- If it was me, I'd be a bit nervous about meeting the God of the man I just deceived!
- But what this whole encounter *impresses* on Jacob, is that the Lord was with him, even when he wasn't aware of it! *Verse 16*:

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it."
verse 16

- Jacob's life to this point hasn't shown many promising signs of faithfulness, *but* the Lord is still with him.
- Jacob was not even seeking the Lord, he was not asking for help or wanting protection. The Lord's presence *wasn't dependent on Jacob at all!*
- I think it's pretty easy to be like Jacob and be totally unaware of the Lord's presence, and so readily forget *that he is with us*.
- The Lord's presence with us is not contingent on the quality of our prayers, our knowledge of the Bible, or how godly our actions are.
- The Lord is with his chosen people in Christ.

11

- Even if we find ourselves in deep regret for our actions, in a mess of our own making, the Lord is still with us.
- Of course the Lord doesn't want us to remain in our sin, or live in a way that causes such dysfunction and pain, but we can be comforted that for those in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, that *even* when we're not seeking him out – or even running from trouble, the Lord is with us.
- How much better would be then, when we live *with an awareness and awe of what is true*, that the Lord is with us.

12

THE LORD'S PROMISES | 28:13-22

주님의 약속 | 主的应许 | ஆண்டவரின் வாக்குத்தந்தம்

Finally, Jacob not only was reminded of the Lord's presence, but **the Lord's promises**.

From verse 13 ...

I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you. 28:13-15

- Isaac prayed that the Lord may keep his promises for Jacob.
And here we see he does!
- The Lord pronounces the same promises he made to *Abraham*:
promises of land,
numerous descendants,
blessings through him and his family to all peoples on earth.
- The Lord affirms what he promised to *Isaac*: that the Lord will be with him.
- The Lord *also* promises what Jacob needs right now:
protection and intervention to bring him home.

13

- These promises are personal – given to Jacob for him and his future family, but they also have a horizon that extends far beyond Jacob to *all* his descendants, and even to all people on earth!
- It is clearly *the Lord* who is the promise-maker. Notice what the Lord says:
*"I will give you and your descendants the land ...
I am with you ...
I will bring you back ...
I will not leave you ... until I have done what I have promised you."*
- The Lord, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac,
makes the promises, but he alone will also *fulfil* them.
- Notice how the Lord's promises are unconditional – they are not dependent on Jacob at all.
- And yet Jacob's response to the Lord is full of conditions. *From verse 20:*

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's household, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth. 28:20-22

- There is quite a contrast between the Lord's promises and Jacob's response!

14

Jacob hedges: *if* God will be with me,
if he will protect and provide for me as he said,
then the Lord will be my God.

- Some commentators have suggested this is a normal way vows are made, but it is hard not to see an element of Jacob's old habit of bargaining sneaking in.
- He doesn't seem to *quite* take all the Lord's promises at his word. Even though the Lord has promised he is currently with him – *and he revealed this to him in a pretty spectacular way* – Jacob seems to want to see how this (God's protection and safe return) will all play out.
- Jacob's trust is fairly tentative and conditional. And yet the Lord is willing to work with that.

15

CONCLUSION

- Maybe for yourself, you find that hard to believe, that God can work with your own conditional or tentative trust.
- But the thing about Jacob, it that while God specifically chooses him – *remember he was chosen not after he passes a faithfulness test, but before he was born*, the very ideas of the promises, and the assurance that they will be fulfilled, *all* begin with the Lord.
- Jacob doesn't seem to be that concerned with how God will bless all the peoples of the earth, he is far more focused on his own needs.
- Jacob was not looking for the Lord, and yet he was found. You might not be looking for the Lord, and yet you are here.
- And Jacob's dream was not a stairway of tasks he needed to complete to meet the Lord. The Lord was already there! The Lord came down to him.
- In the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to the very same dream Jacob had. Speaking to the disciples there he says:

16

“Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.” *John 1:51*

- This is the same, but different.
There are angels of God ascending and descending,
but there is no stairway from heaven to earth,
only the Son of Man.
- The reason we can know God and experience joy in his presence,
is not because we have lived a good life,
but because Christ has come down to us.
- The very things we want to hide or erase from our life and from our character,
are what Jesus came to die for.
- We don’t have to wait for our own dream of angels to know God’s presence,
For the Lord has come to us in Jesus,
and has invited us to trust in him.
- We’re all imperfect.
We’re all works in progress.
- Jacob had a glimpse of God being with him,
But in Christ, we can know that in full.

17

*Gracious Father, thank you that you meet us where we are,
that you are not turned away by what we’re like or what we’ve done.
Thank you for coming to us in Christ, and opening the way for us to know you.
In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.*

18