

***PATTERNS  
FROM  
GENESIS***

***For young people***

## Preface - Please Read

The stories recorded in the pages of the Bible are not only ancient but also timeless. They have endured millennia because, through them, people of all the ages, of all the nations of the earth, and of all walks of life, have found the spiritual enlightenment, understanding, and guidance that they longed for and could find in no other book. Of course, such discovery is accompanied by great joy and hope, through what Paul calls "the encouragement of the Scriptures" (Rom. 15:4).

Most of what the Bible teaches, and especially in the Old Testament, is not written in the form of lessons, but as stories. These sacred stories record God's involvement in the lives of His chosen people. Thus, as one reads the stories, one is taught about God, His nature, and His ways. One book, Esther, does not once mention the word "God," yet when one reads this sacred story, one is deeply impressed with God's sovereign care for the lives of His people as He operates in a hidden way on their behalf.

These stories are not written as textbook lessons to teach the reader about our wonderful God; rather they are written with the intention of revealing God to the reader as He works in the lives of His people. The "lesson" is embodied in the story.

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## GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE FOR MAN (1)

Only one book in all the earth tells us where we came from, and this wonderful book is the Bible. The Bible tells us how everything came into being. Even more importantly, it tells us how we ourselves came into being. It also tells us the story of the very first person that ever lived on this earth, a man named Adam.

What many people do not know is that long, long before God created Adam, He had already made a plan for him, and not only for him, but for millions and millions of other people! He already knew each one of them (even before they existed!) and selected them to be a special people for Himself. Before creating anything, He already planned everything for His people, who were so special to Him and the treasure of His heart. He planned everything with much love and great care. It was for them that God created the universe with the heavens, the stars, and the earth. We are among His people! And the Bible tells us that when God created the universe, everything was perfect and very beautiful. The creation was definitely the work of His hands and showed His greatness. We read that, when the angels looked upon this wonderful work that God had created, they sang for joy.

And so it was, until one of God's angels--in fact, the highest and most beautiful archangel, named Lucifer--became filled with pride. He became proud because of the great beauty and wisdom with which God had created him. Instead of giving the glory to God, he wanted to steal that glory for himself. One day, he even coveted the throne of God and wanted to set himself above God! Finally, when he had completely deceived himself, his heart became filled with foolishness, and he attempted to overthrow God. He rebelled against God! This is why God judged him, and the

whole earth together with him, because the earth had been placed under Lucifer's rule. Even though the earth was the most special place in the whole universe, because of Lucifer's sin it was judged by God, who covered it with water, and filled the heavens with darkness. Oh, it was terrible and very, very sad!

The mighty God who had created the earth with such beauty now looked upon the horrible destruction and darkness that covered it. Although God had to judge the earth because of Lucifer's wicked rebellion, He could never forget His great plan of having a special group of people for Himself!

What would He do now? In His heart of love there was no choice: God had to re-make the earth, and that is exactly what He did. He made it even more wonderful than He had the first time. He began by making the light and separating the light from the darkness. Then He made a great expanse of air by separating the waters below the expanse into the seas and the water above the expanse into clouds. Finally, on the third day God separated the dry ground from the great seas. Now that there was light, air, and dry land, God could begin restoring life on the earth.

He first created millions of plants. The grass covered the dry land like the most beautiful green carpet. Then God adorned the earth with flowers, bushes, vines, and fruit trees of many different kinds. Soon the earth was blooming again! But even though it was so beautiful, it was still missing something very important--the animals! Up to the third day there was only enough light to give life to the plants, but there was not enough light for animals to live on the earth. Animals need more light to live than the plants do. Can you imagine a world without animals? Scriptural reference: Genesis 1:1-13

## GOD CREATED THE UNIVERSE FOR MAN (2)

To have an environment where animals could live, God had to do something very special so that the sun, the moon, and the stars would shine more brightly. God did this on the fourth day so that He could create the animals. On the fifth day, once there was enough light, God created the animals. He began with the animals that live in the seas, and then He made the birds that fly in the air. Then on the sixth day, the last day of His work, God created all the animals that live on the dry ground. He created small animals, like rabbits, and large animals, like lions, and enormous animals, like giraffes and elephants.

So, in six days the earth was completely restored and every kind of life flourished in what was before emptiness, darkness, and death. Now the earth was covered with every kind of plant and many thousands and thousands of different kinds of animals lived there. Once again the earth was perfect in its order and beauty. Now it was ready to serve as home for that very special group of people God had always dreamed of having; it could be the place where those that loved Him could live together with Him forever.

On the afternoon of the sixth day, with everything prepared, God came and,

with the greatest love and tenderness, began to create what He had always longed for: the one who would be His companion and friend forever, man. With great detail and care God formed His man out of the dust of the earth. Man was not designed or created according to the image of any other creature, but according to the very image and likeness of God. Even when Adam's clay form lay still on the ground, he was perfect. He was missing only one thing: life. Then God stooped down and put His mouth on Adam's nose and carefully breathed the breath of life into him. Immediately Adam began to live! His heart began to beat within him, his lungs filled with air, and then his eyes opened up. Adam arose from the earth and immediately met his Creator. Perhaps the first whisper of love that he heard was when God gave him his name, Adam. Surely Adam felt God's pure love toward him and rested in complete confidence in His Creator. That very day, with a heart filled with joy and complete satisfaction, God blessed Adam.

Scriptural references: Genesis 1-2; Job 38:4-7; Isaiah 14:12-14; Hebrews 11:3

## GOD CREATED EVE

God prepared a beautiful garden for Adam, his greatest creation, near the place where Adam had been created. They often walked together in the cool of the evening in the charming garden that God had prepared for Adam's delight. God not only gave Adam this paradise to take care of, but also gave him dominion, the power to rule, over every living creature, as well as over all the earth. All the animals were under his power. What a great responsibility Adam had! He had to take care of everything God had put under his care, and he had to do so faithfully. At that time, all the animals were under his authority and obeyed him perfectly. Just as God expected Adam to take care of the beautiful garden and to rule over all the animals, often times we, too, are expected to take care of something for someone else. It is not easy to find people who are faithful in taking care of the things they are asked to do.

Once, while God and Adam they were talking in the garden, God commanded Adam saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may eat freely, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of it you shall not eat; for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Surely Adam knew he must obey God, because God had created him with great intelligence. God gave Adam the big job of naming all the animals, including the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. God had created many different kinds of animals and birds, and to give each one the proper name was not easy. Adam had to look at each one carefully and consider how it differed from other animals. He probably even had to study each one and consider what name to

give it. Because there were so many thousands of animals Adam had to be very thoughtful, careful, and patient so that he could properly name each one. Oftentimes we like to do things quickly and carelessly instead of thinking about it carefully. However, we should remember the careful job Adam did in giving all the animals their names. This will help us to be careful and thoughtful instead of impatient and quick whenever we have a difficult job to do.

After naming all the animals, Adam noted that no animal was like him. Immediately, Adam experienced a feeling he had never felt before: he felt alone. Adam also longed for someone to share his life and his love. And though he looked for this one among all the animals he named, he found no one who could fill this deep feeling in his heart. Then God caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam and God took a warm rib from under his heart while he slept and closed up the flesh again. Just as He had fashioned the dust and clay before, out of this rib God formed the dearest and sweetest woman. She was very much like man, yet somewhat different. In every aspect she was gentler and had a special grace with which to meet Adam's every need. God brought to Adam the dearest gift that his heart could imagine. When Adam saw her, he said, "Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." He knew immediately that somehow she had come out from him and that now she should return to him. As God parted from them, He looked back on His fair and finished work, and He saw that it was very good.

Scriptural reference: Genesis 2:18-23

## GOD CALLED ADAM AND EVE

Adam and Eve lived happily together in their garden home, which was called Eden. All the delights of the garden had been made for Adam and Eve to enjoy. Sometimes Eve found herself alone in the garden, but she had no worry about that. She felt safe and secure, with nothing to fear.

At that time there was a creature that God had created which was especially attractive: the serpent. Perhaps the beautiful colors and mystical shapes of the serpent fascinated Eve. Certainly Satan knew this. Maybe that was the reason that he came to Eve one day in the form of a serpent. He spoke softly to her as he subtly drew her to the forbidden tree. Eve tried her best to understand his words when he said to her, "If you eat of this tree you will be like God, one who knows good and evil."

Trusting in her own ability to answer the serpent, Eve did not call Adam, her husband, to help. Instead, she answered on her own, "God told us that we should not eat of that tree, or touch it or we would die."

Actually, God had not said that they could not "touch" the tree; this was Eve's own word. Either she did not remember exactly what Adam had told her or she was simply exaggerating what he said. A careful listener would never do that. To exaggerate, or to make something more than it really is, is not truthful. It is very close to lying.

Once the serpent had completely captured her attention, Satan boldly lied to her saying, "You will not die! Rather, God knows that if you eat of it you will be like God, one who knows good and evil."

Eve considered his words as she looked at the tree. The fruit looked so nice! Everything seemed so harmless. Then Eve picked a fruit and took the bite of death. Not fully realizing how wrong she had been to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, she found Adam and offered him the beautiful, sweet

fruit to enjoy also. Although Adam knew that he should not eat of it, he did so anyway. We do not really know why Adam ate of the fruit. Perhaps his wife urged him to do so. We should all be warned to be strong to not do what others would like to convince us to do when we know it is wrong. It is better to be firm, even though it is hard, and say "NO!"

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sinned, they realized that they were naked and felt ashamed, so they sewed some fig leaves together to make aprons to clothe themselves. It seems that by making these aprons they were not only trying to cover themselves but were also trying to cover up their sin. However, this is never the way to take when we sin or make mistakes.

When God came to visit them they were so afraid that they hid themselves among the trees! They felt so bad! But God called out to Adam and said "Where are you?"

Of course God knew exactly where they were and why they were hiding. But He wanted them to come to Him willingly so He could talk to them and they could confess their sin. When Adam and Eve came to God, Adam told Him that when he heard His voice in the garden he hid himself because he was afraid, since he was naked. God gently asked Adam, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

This was the perfect opportunity for Adam and Eve to plainly confess their sin to God. But instead of simply confessing that they had disobeyed Him and had eaten of the tree He had forbidden them to eat from, they began to make excuses and to put the blame on others! Whenever we sin or make a mistake we should honestly confess our sin or mistake; then we can receive mercy and forgiveness. To make up stories or to lie will not work. It will only make our sin greater.

Although God had warned them that if they ate of the forbidden tree they must die, they were greatly surprised that day when God showed them a way for them to receive forgiveness of their sins as well as cover their nakedness. Instead of having them die that day, God killed one of the animals, probably a pure, perfect little lamb, in order to make coats for them from its skins. This was God's way to not only cover Adam and Eve's nakedness, but also to forgive them for their sin of disobedience. Surely Adam and Eve watched both in wonder and in sadness as that animal was sacrificed in their stead. They knew they were the ones who should have died for their sin. Instead, an animal died in their place and the blood of that animal was accepted by God for the forgiveness of their sins.

Can you imagine the relief and joy that filled Adam and Eve that day, when they realized that they would not have to die immediately? That they would still be allowed to live for many more years, to have children and await the coming of their Savior? However, sin would be a constant source of grief for them, something so terrible that it could be erased only by shedding the blood of some animal. But this was the only way for sin to be forgiven. There was no other way. This was the way that God had showed them. Any other way to try and find forgiveness or to cover their nakedness would be as useless as the poor fig-leaf coverings they made for themselves as they hid from God that day in the garden.

Certainly, just as God had warned, Adam and Eve had to die, even though this

was never in God's plan. However, they would not die immediately. God allowed them to live for nearly one thousand years, which in His eyes is just a little less than one day. But even though they would live and not die right away, they would have to leave their home, the garden, and go out to a cursed and dry earth filled with thorns and thistles, where they would have to make their own home to shelter themselves from the heat and cold, and also from the animals, which had now become wild.

Adam and Eve brought much sorrow upon themselves and upon all the human race. Even more, they caused God Himself great sorrow. He had chosen them to be the parents of all His dear people forever and to subdue His enemy, Satan. And although God had clearly warned them what would happen if they ate from the forbidden fruit, they disobeyed His warning. Their disobedience caused much suffering to them, to the animals, and to everything else. Because of their sin of disobedience, death came in and damaged everything on earth. Not only do people die, but the animals die, the plants die, the leaves fall off of the flowers and trees. We should all do our best to be obedient whenever we are given instructions. And especially we should be most obedient whenever we are given a warning. Warnings are given to us at times by our parents or other people to prevent us from suffering from danger, harm, or grief.

Scriptural references: Genesis 3; Romans 5:19



## CAIN AND ABEL (1)

Although Adam and Eve had to leave the beautiful Garden of Eden, God did not leave them naked and ashamed. Nobody would like to live that way. Instead, God covered them with the lovely coats of the skins of the animals that God sacrificed for them. Adam and Eve began to live outside the garden and soon they had children. According to Genesis 4, they had two sons, Cain and his younger brother Abel. God promised Eve that one day her "seed," that is, her descendant, would crush the serpent's head. With this hope in mind she named her firstborn son, who was special to her, Cain, which means "acquired." She thought Cain would be the one to avenge them of Satan's dreadful lies which caused her to sin and fall.

As they grew up surely Cain and Abel saw many animals sacrificed by their parents. It was all so clear because they heard it over and over: the only way to find forgiveness for their sins was for an animal to be killed and its blood to be poured out before God. In this way Adam and Eve need not die eternally for their sins for the blood of an animal was accepted by God at that time as their substitute. And just as God accepted the blood of the lamb they offered to Him for forgiveness of their sins, one day God's beloved Son would come to earth to die as the Substitute for all of the sins of the whole world.

This was why Adam and Eve could not cover themselves with fig leaves. No! An animal must die! The blood of an animal was what God required for forgiveness at that time. Adam and Eve must have been very deeply impressed with what they saw. Then they followed God's example over and over again and offered the blood of some dear animal sacrifice for their sins. Cain and Abel saw this and were impressed with this from their earliest memories. This was the way

God had shown their parents, and this was the way that the parents had taught their children. There was no other way. But did they listen? Although they had heard their parents explain this to them over and over it seems that Abel listened to what his parents told them and followed their example, but Cain did not.

No doubt Cain was a strong and hardworking young man. His younger brother, Abel, was a good boy and perhaps more quiet and gentle. It seems that from all that Abel had seen and heard from his parents about what had happened after they sinned and the way that God had showed them to receive forgiveness, he chose to be a shepherd. He wanted to raise sheep to offer to God. He wanted to follow the way that his parents had shown him to be forgiven by God of his sins and be pleasing to God. Cain, however, was a person who trusted in himself and felt that he did not need to kill an animal for his sins. Although he heard what his parents told them as they grew up and watched their example, he chose to do things his own way, so he chose to be a farmer, one who cultivated the earth. He preferred to work hard and sweat on the now-cursed earth, which grew thorns and thistles, rather than tend sheep as his younger brother did. He felt he could please God in his own way. He did not believe he had to follow his parents' instructions or example of offering animal sacrifices for his sins.

Eventually the time came when the boys were older to bring God their own offerings, instead of depending on their parents' offerings. They both knew very well that the only way to approach God was through the shed blood of some chosen, spotless animal, because for many years they had heard their parents' instruction and had seen the

example of how their parents drew near to God through the blood of an animal sacrifice.

To offer these lambs and sheep to God was so important to Abel that raising them was the main part of his life. He always carefully watched over his flock. In this way he not only honored the example and the instructions of his parents, but also honored God. Instead of following the good example of his younger brother, Cain may very well have looked down on his brother. Since Cain was a farmer and had no animal to offer to God as a sacrifice, he would have had to

accept a lamb from his brother to offer as a sacrifice; but he would not do that. Instead, he brought an impressive display of the produce for his own hard work on the land. Perhaps Abel reminded him of the way God had taught their parents to bring a sacrifice to the altar when they came to worship Him. It is always wise to pay attention to what our parents tell us and, in this way, to honor them.

Scriptural references: Genesis 4; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12

## CAIN AND ABEL (2)

We can imagine that the two brothers awoke full of excitement on the morning that they were going to offer a sacrifice to God by themselves for the first time. Each one probably built his own altar. Although Cain had heard his parents' instructions about offering animals to God, did he pay attention? Did he choose to honor the way his parents had shown him to worship God? Not at all. He felt he could worship God in his own way. He did not care to follow his parents' bloody way of killing an animal as an offering to God. Instead, Cain hardened his heart. He would not honor either God or his parents. Rather, he stubbornly offered what he had produced from farming the ground. Although Cain's altar was filled with the best produce, his altar had no blood from the sacrifice of any lamb. How could God be pleased with Cain's offering? How could Adam or Eve be happy when they saw Cain's unwillingness to follow the example they had shown him all his life, in coming to God for forgiveness only by offering Him a sacrifice for his sins?

Abel, however, was very different than his older brother. Able offered to God one of the very best lambs he had raised in his flock. Although it was not pleasant to kill one of those dear lambs he had cared for, Able honored the example that his parents had shown him. After all, this was the way God had provided for them to receive the forgiveness of sins. How could he not follow what he had seen and heard from them?

After presenting their offerings, Cain and Abel waited. They waited for some sign that would show that God had accepted their offering. Sometimes we see in the Bible that when God accepted an offering He sent fire down from heaven to consume it. We do not know how God made it known to them, but in a short time they knew that

Abel's offering was accepted by God. In the meantime, Cain also waited at his altar for some sign of acceptance. However, no sign of approval came from God. The Bible tells us that this is because God was not pleased with Cain's offering. Seeing that God was not pleased with his offering, Cain should have repented for not worshipping God in the way that God wanted to be worshipped, that is, according to the way He had shown to Cain's parents. However, instead of admitting that he was wrong, Cain became jealous of his brother and very angry with him. Cain not only became angry with his brother Abel, but he even became angry with God! Oh, we should fear when our hearts are filled with jealousy or anger! Cain asked himself, "Why should God accept Abel's offering and not mine? That is not fair!" Then, because he would not admit that he was wrong, but instead was jealous of God's acceptance of Abel's offering, he began to hate his brother. God's desire is that we should love one another, especially our brothers and sisters; but because of his jealousy, instead of loving his younger brother, Cain hated him.

Although Cain did not realize it, God was watching all of this. In His mercy and kindness, God gave Cain a chance to change his bad attitude. God told Cain something like this, "Why are you angry, and why is your face fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? But if you do not repent and change your attitude, sin will be crouching at your door like a wild beast to devour you!"

In His mercy to Cain, God was warning him! How dangerous it is, and how foolish it is to reject any warning from God or from others! God was telling him that the reason his face was sad and downcast was because he was not doing anything good--that is, he was not presenting his offering according to

the way he should. If he did not repent of the hardness of his heart and of his stubborn attitude, the sin which was filling his heart would spring out like a wild beast to harm him! How foolish it is to not pay attention to any warning to us, especially when it comes from our parents or persons who are older and wiser than we are.

However, instead of repenting and changing his stubborn attitude for not offering the blood of a lamb to God on his altar as God had shown his parents, the next thing we read is that Cain said to Abel, "Let us go into the field." Then that day while they were away in the field, Cain rose up against his brother, Abel, and killed him.

After this God met Cain and asked him, "Where is Abel, your brother?"

He answered, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Cain showed no sign of sorrow or repentance for what he had done. Rather, God saw only his pride and hardness of heart. Then God said to him plainly, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying out to Me from the ground ... which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood."

From then on, as part of God's punishment of Cain, the earth would not yield to his strength when Cain farmed, as it had before. Nevertheless, Cain still refused to turn to the Lord for forgiveness. Instead,

he left God's presence and lived as a wanderer. His heart was so hardened that he never did repent or turn back to God.

That night, as it grew later and later, neither son came home. Probably when Adam could not wait any longer, he went out into the darkness to find them, with Eve likely following him. Finally they found Abel in the field lying on the ground, not moving, not responding to them. Adam and Eve faced the death of a human being for the first time, when they found their beloved son Abel killed. This was the hardest and blackest night they had ever faced in their whole life, when they met both death and murder at the same time. Eve knew now that Cain also was lost to them. The same serpent's poison that entered Eve when she sinned had also entered into her son, Cain. What a grief-stricken mother she must have been!

The Lord God looked with sympathy upon Adam and Eve in their agony. God's heart was filled with pity and mercy, not only for them but for all mankind. Since sin poisoned the human race, no one can avoid the serpent's nature and the death to which it leads.

Scriptural references: Genesis 4; Hebrews 11:4; 1 John 3:12

## GOD CALLED ENOSH

Long, long ago a very special baby boy was born. He may have been weak and sickly because his parents named him "Enosh," meaning "fragile" or "mortal," which suggests he was a fragile baby who might die suddenly. Perhaps they were not sure whether he would live long.

Enosh was Adam's grandson. Since his grandfather Adam was still alive, Enosh no doubt knew all the stories that Adam passed on to the family. How pleasant it must have been for Enosh to hear about the beautiful Garden of Eden that God prepared for Adam and Eve! And how sad it was that the way to this garden was closed, so that none could return there! Enosh also realized that the world outside the garden was very different from what it had once been, since God had cursed the earth with thorns and they had to work very hard to cultivate it. Also, now the animals were no longer friendly, so he could not play with them.

Enosh knew his weaknesses all too well. It is not easy to have a physical weakness or handicap. Some children have deformities, such as crooked feet, while others have hearing problems or problems with their sight. It may have been because of his weaknesses that Enosh felt that he needed God in his life in a very special way, so he

turned to the only One in the entire universe who was always near when he needed Him.

The Bible does not tell us very much about Enosh, but it does tell us that, during Enosh's time, men began to pray to God and to call upon His name. People usually call upon the Lord's name so that He will help them. No doubt, calling on the Lord became Enosh's answer to his weaknesses, his fears, and all his needs. By calling on the Lord, Enosh experienced how strong, powerful and dear God was! As others saw the blessing that Enosh experienced by calling upon the name of the Lord, they, too, began to call on the Lord. The simple truth is that calling on the Lord was indeed the best thing they could do.

Would you rather be a powerful, mighty man who never needs help from anyone, or would you rather be like Enosh and find that by calling on the mighty God, He becomes your real strength? Enosh truly made a great discovery: he discovered that he could call on God moment by moment and thus enjoy His presence as his timely help.

Scriptural references: Genesis 4:26; Psalms 145:18

## GOD CALLED ENOCH

One of the shortest stories in the whole Bible, and perhaps among the most interesting, is in Genesis chapter five. This is the story of Enoch, who was a great, great grandson of Enosh. The Bible does not tell us anything about the life of Enoch until he had his first son. Then it tells us that, after his son was born, "Enoch walked with God."

At that time, people around Enoch were forgetting God. Because they turned their backs on God, they became very wicked and sinful. At that time there were no kings or government to keep some kind of order and, because people did not live by their conscience, everything became very evil and sinful.

Surely, all these things began to worry Enoch more and more. With no one around to whom he could really open his burdened heart and worries, Enoch began to talk with God. He talked with Him about everything! As time went by, he found that it was easier to talk with God while he walked. Wherever he went Enoch walked and talked with God. Whether in the city or the countryside; whether at home or at work; whether he was alone or with others; whether day or night, Enoch learned the great secret of walking with God.

To walk with another person is different than asking someone to walk with you. The Bible says that Enoch walked with God, which is different than God walking with Enoch. If you want to walk with another person, it means that when that person goes forward, you must go forward; when that person makes a turn, you must turn. It also means that you must walk at the same speed as the other person, and stop if the other person stops. If you want to walk with another person it means that you need to follow them closely in everything they do. In fact, it is not easy to walk with someone, especially if you do not like the person very

much! However, if you love a person it is much easier to walk with him, because even though you need to pay attention to the other person and concentrate on how he walks and everything he does, it is not a chore, but it is really a pleasure and an enjoyment. Sometimes when we take a special walk or hike with our parents or our close friends we experience this.

The Bible tells us that after Enoch had his first son, Methuselah, he walked with God for three hundred years. Of course, his greatest comfort and enjoyment was to walk with God each day. This is how Enoch lived and raised his family. This is also how Enoch kept himself separate from all the wicked persons and things going on around him while he waited for the Lord's coming with all of His angels (Jude 14). Walking with God was simply Enoch's normal, daily way of life.

Walking and talking with God in this way was truly wonderful! Surely Enoch began to love God very much, and surely God loved Enoch even more. God had missed walking with man in such a close way ever since Adam hid himself from Him long ago in the garden. The friendship between Enoch and God grew closer and closer as time passed by. Just think, they walked together in such a close friendship for three hundred years!

The Bible does not tell us how Enoch walked with God so we cannot say exactly how it was. It seems that Enoch learned to live with God's invisible presence at all times. We know that God is always close to those who believe in Him and love Him. The Bible tells us that He is near to all those who call upon Him. So we believe that Enoch learned to walk with God in a very ordinary way. Walking and talking, talking and walking, as two of the very closest friends. Don't we all enjoy being with someone with

whom we can freely talk and open our heart? With one we trust and can share all that we are thinking and experiencing? With one with whom we can share any of our secrets? Well, that is how it was for Enoch when he walked with God. God was surely his very best friend! Such a relationship did not develop overnight. Rather, it was developed day by day, year by year, during a long time of three hundred years!

We do not know exactly how it happened, but perhaps on one evening while Enoch was walking with God it was later than usual. God's presence was so real to Enoch, as real as though the two were walking arm in arm. It may be that as they walked on and on, suddenly the town where Enoch lived was far away. Even the shores of earth seemed far away-- so far away! And now the stars looked so close as they were gradually ascending. Perhaps this time God asked, "Enoch, instead of returning to your home, would you like to come home with me

tonight?" Enoch was delighted, and that night Enoch continued walking with God and never again returned to earth!

When Enoch did not return home that night the people in his town probably looked for him. They looked here and there and everywhere, until they were sure that it was not possible to find him, because they knew that Enoch walked with God and that God had taken him to be with Him.

God is always happy to enjoy our company and friendship. He is always delighted when we walk with Him, talk with Him, and share all that is in our heart with Him. We do not have to be grown-ups to walk with God. He is happy to join us and be with us at any time, in any place. Like Enoch, we also can love God, talk freely to God, and walk with God.

Scriptural references: Genesis 5:22-24; Hebrews 11:5-6

## GOD CALLED NOAH (1)

A very long time ago, the whole earth was covered with water by a massive flood. Genesis 6 tells us that God "saw that the wickedness of man was great ... and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually ... and it grieved Him in His heart." When God saw that the people were unwilling to change their ways, He said, "I will blot out the man whom I have created from the surface of the ground, man to beast to creeping things to the birds of heaven."

Many generations before this, God was forced to close the beautiful Garden of Eden because of Adam and Eve's disobedience. Now, by Noah's time, very few people sought the Lord; in fact, nearly everyone was going hopelessly downward and had hardly any thought of God. The situation worsened continuously until, as this chapter tells us, the evil and wickedness were beyond recovery. God could no longer tolerate the situation. Although it sorely pained God's heart, man became so completely degraded that He had no choice but to judge him, the very one that He had created to be His special people.

In such a desperate situation we read in verses 8-9, "But Noah found favor in the sight of Jehovah ... Noah was a righteous man, and blameless ... and Noah walked with God." Noah was different from those around him. He was not afraid to be different from others because he believed in God, and he also believed everything that he had learned about God through the stories his parents had told him about how his ancestors lived. No doubt he not only heard what they told him about how they lived, but he also practiced everything he heard. Like Abel, Noah also offered a lamb as a sacrifice whenever he came before God. And like Enosh, he also felt his need of God's help and called upon Him. And like Enoch, Noah

always walked with God everywhere and talked with Him about everything that occupied his heart.

Because of what God saw in Noah, He decided that He would not destroy man completely, as He had considered doing. He made a plan so that this one righteous man and his family could escape. One day God opened His heart and told His plan to Noah. Noah believed God's Word and obeyed everything God spoke to him. Noah prepared to build a tremendous ark, which is a kind of boat, right there where they all lived. Of course this was very strange to those around him. He did everything he could to warn them that God was going to cause it to rain on the earth and fill it with water to destroy every living person and creature if they did not repent and change their wicked ways. Perhaps others could have also escaped if they had listened to Noah's word and turned away from their evil ways. But they would not listen to him. They just mocked him and laughed at him saying, "A boat should be built by the seashore, not here!"

Noah told them that his ark did not need to be built by the seashore, because God would open the windows of heaven and pour forth water. At that time, it did not rain on the earth, so the people thought Noah was just crazy to think that water would somehow drop down from the sky! They made fun of this also, and the crowds laughed at Noah as he preached to them and warned them to change their wicked ways. However, Noah and his family were not discouraged by their rejection and taunts. Because Noah believed in God, he and his sons continued working diligently every day to build the ark, just as God had told him. Nothing could stop them.

Building the ark was indeed a huge job. It was the size of a large ocean liner! It had



three stories and many rooms for all the animals it would house. The ark only had one very large door that would also serve as a ramp for the animals of the fields and forests to come aboard when the time came for them to do so. Noah prepared places for the birds of the sky. Of course, he did not forget to prepare rooms for food and provisions, as well as living quarters for himself, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. It seems the Lord knew beforehand that no one would repent. Only Noah and his family believed God's word that one day a great flood was going to cover the whole earth.

Noah and his household worked very hard. Oh, how slowly the work seemed to go! Just imagine trying to work with no electricity, with no electric saws or drills. Everything had to be done with hand tools. And although they probably hired people to help them, not even one believed in Noah's warnings. Years and years went by. It took Noah and his family a total of one hundred twenty years to finish the ark. He could see

that God's way was perfect. Although He gave the people the opportunity to hear His warnings, they only hated God more and more and refused His salvation. Could anyone ever measure God's patience in waiting so long, or Noah's faithfulness in serving for so many years?

Finally, the great reward for all of Noah's labor was very near. The ark was absolutely perfect, the right solution for the flood that was coming. Noah fulfilled all the instructions that God had given him and built the ark exactly according to His plan. If we could have been there, no doubt we would have wanted to go into the ark with Noah and his family! Let us also be like Noah and follow every instruction and warning that is given to us. In this way we may carefully and diligently finish everything that is given to us to do!

Scriptural references: Genesis 5:32-7:1;  
Hebrews 11:7

## GOD CALLED NOAH (2)

After so many years of hard work, the ark was finally finished and all the necessary supplies were safely stored in it. This mighty boat was a memorial to the whole world of the patience and suffering of righteous Noah and his family. And now God's grace and kindness would be their rest and reward. Genesis 7 begins with "Come into the ark, you and all your household." The word "come" means that the Lord God was already inside the ark waiting for them.

God told Noah that after seven days He would cause it to rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. Perhaps during that week while Noah and his family waited in the ark they asked themselves what was going to happen and what it would be like for it rain for forty days and forty nights!

The people who had laughed at Noah and his family for many years all watched curiously as he, his wife, and his three sons and their wives went into the ark. They had a final seven-day warning from Noah and his family as they entered into the ark. They had an additional warning as well. Those gathered in the area witnessed a strange and wonderful sign. From the forest and the hills came every kind of animal and beast in groups of sevens and twos. Many birds also came into the ark flying overhead. All came to that one wide-open door with its heavy gangplank set down for them.

Obediently, they all went into Noah's ark just as God commanded. The animals

entered in pairs made up of a male and a female. Some entered with two pairs, and others went in with seven pairs.

All these animals, birds, and creeping things came into Noah's ark just as God commanded. They had no trouble obeying their Creator. They were easily led into the places that Noah and his sons had prepared for them. The larger and heavier animals, as well as the unclean beasts and creeping things, were probably led to the lower story, where it was darkest. Perhaps God made them hibernate (sleep) there. Noah and his family had prepared a place for each type of animal and bird in order to keep everything in the best order. They were all comfortable and quiet. God's presence was there, so there was no confusion at all. How could it have been any other way? This was the Lord's doing! We who care for animals have never seen anything like this!

The seventh day finally came to an end, and what a wonder! All were safely in the ark when the great door to the ark closed. The Bible says emphatically that after everyone was in, the Lord Himself shut the door! Can you imagine what the people outside the ark felt when the huge ramp was closed tightly right in front of their eyes?

Scriptural reference: Genesis 6:1-17

### GOD CALLED NOAH (3)

The seven days passed by quickly while Noah and his family waited in the ark. Then God Almighty opened the heavens and waters began to pour forth from above. Darkness and noise flooded the scene outside the ark, and soon the wicked people and the memory of them would be buried under the waters.

In the ark, all was peaceful and all were safe. There was plenty of food and now they experienced a good rest during the heavy storm. Before long the ark was lifted high above the mountain peaks. There, within the ark, this most blest family ate and served together as they looked forward to the new life ahead. This is how they spent many months.

After ten long months, Noah wanted to see if the waters had gone down. So he opened the ark's only window and released a raven. The raven never returned. He later released a dove, but the dove returned to the ark because it found no resting place, because water still covered the earth. When Noah released the dove the second time, she returned with an olive leaf in her beak. This meant that although the earth was not fully dry, the waters were going down. Seven days later Noah sent the dove out one more time, but this time the dove did not return. Noah knew then that the waters had dried up and that green plant life was starting to blossom. Oh, what a beautiful sight!

When the ark rested firmly on dry land, Noah and his family ventured forth into the

new earth. With hearts filled with thankfulness for God's mercy and care for them, the first thing they did was to build an altar and offer sacrifices to Him. God accepted their love offering and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

Noah and his family thus heard the same blessing that God had given to Adam and Eve many years before. It seems that God withheld children from them during the years of preparing the ark. But now they could multiply and bring forth a new race. It was after this that they experienced God's blessing of having little children in their families and home life. Once again God had prepared everything to have that special people on the earth for Himself. They were God's own family with His blessing.

And now, after many months of mist and clouds, God Himself set His rainbow in the sky. It must have been the most beautiful sight they had ever seen! God promised them that He would never again destroy all of the earth with a flood, and He told them that the rainbow would be there as a sign of His promise to them so that they would not be fearful every time it rained. Instead of fearing the rain they could give thanks to God for the rain that He sent to water the earth.

Scriptural references: Genesis 7:1-9:17; 2 Peter 2:5; 3:3-6

## GOD CALLED JOB (1)

A very long time ago, around the time of Abraham, lived a very, very godly man named Job. He had the greatest experience with God and also the most dreadful encounter with the devil. While he was passing through this dreadful experience he wanted to share it with the whole world. But no papyrus roll would last through the ages, so he prayed, "Oh that my words were now written ... in a book! That with an iron pen and with lead they were engraved in rock forever!" (Job 19:23-24). God answered Job's prayer, though it is a mystery how He answered. But now the book of Job is right in the middle of our Bible.

Long before Job's great trial began, God had cast Satan out from his place in the highest heaven. Since then he always kept his eye on the earth, where he always walked up and down looking for ways to cause trouble. He hated this grand man Job, who loved and worshipped God and also cared for the poor people.

One day in heaven when the angels of God came before Him, Satan came also. And as you might expect, he did not come for any good reason. He only came to accuse Job before God, saying that he was not pure in his love for God. He said to God, "Does Job fear God without a cause?" What he meant was that Job did not really fear God because he loved Him and honored Him, but because God had blessed him with many riches. Then Satan said something like this, "Your servant Job will curse you to Your face if you take away that high wall of protection you've put around him and all his riches ... Extend now Your hand and touch all that Job has and You will see that Job will blaspheme You to your face." Satan was telling God that Job was only serving God because God blessed him with many good things, but if He took away the good things, Job would not love God. Rather, he would even blaspheme God

to His face!" But God knew that Job's heart was sincere toward Him. That is why God had the confidence to tell Satan that he was very wrong. And even to prove it, He allowed Satan to touch whatever Job had, but He put a limit, telling him, "Only do not stretch forth your hand against him." In other words, Satan could touch anything that was Job's, but he could not touch Job himself! So Satan planned all the evil he could do to Job.

It all happened this way: one day while Job was quietly at home, four messengers came one after another to tell him that some thieves, the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, had taken all of his oxen, donkeys, and camels and killed all his servants. Also, there was a great fire that fell from heaven and killed all of his flocks of sheep and even the shepherds. How terrible! But this was not the worst. Finally the last messenger told him the worst news of all, that while his seven sons and daughters were together eating, a big wind blew upon the house they were in and caused it to fall down on them and they were all crushed to death. Surely, this was the worst day in all of Job's life!

After hearing all of this bad news, Job stood up. What a man Job was! Although his loss was so great and the pain in his heart was nearly unbearable, Job did not throw a tantrum nor did he become angry with God. Rather, "Job rose up and tore his clothes and shaved his head, and fell to the earth and worshipped God! Job believed in God and knew that everything that happens in the life of those who love Him come from Him, whether it seems good or bad. This is why in no way did Job blame God. Job's attitude and actions showed how wrong Satan was!

[Scriptural references: the book of Job; James 5:11; Ezek. 14:14, 20]

## GOD CALLED JOB (2)

When Satan saw that Job did not blaspheme God even when he had lost all of his possessions and his children, he was furious and looked for the first opportunity to see God again. When he returned to God, Satan said that Job would curse God to His face if He would touch Job's body and cause him to have pain. God would not do that, but He gave Satan permission to do just that. But just as in the first test, God put a limit as to what he could do to Job. God said to Satan, "Here he is, in your hand; only spare his life." God trusted Job that much! Through this test of Job, God was going to put His enemy, as well as Job's enemy, Satan, to shame.

This time Satan did his worst. Job's whole body was covered with sore boils from the top of his head to the soles of his feet. He could neither stand nor sit nor lie down comfortably.

Three of Job's friends came to comfort him. They had never seen anyone suffer like that and they felt sure that Job must have had some hidden sin; otherwise, they concluded, "God would surely never let such a terrible thing happen to him." Job answered that it was not for any sin in him that he suffered, but that God was testing him for some reason, though he did not understand why. Job's three friends were no help or comfort to him. He was older than they were and he said that since he was in such trouble, they should have pity on him and not blame him for things that were not true.

Job's sores got worse; his skin turned black and split open. In his suffering, one time He prayed and begged God to let him die and go to be with Him, instead of living with such terrible suffering. Job was desperate. On another occasion he told Zophar, one of his comforters, "He [God] knows the way that I take; should He try me,

I would come forth as gold" (23:10). This meant that Job had the confidence that he was right in God's sight and that if God would test him He would come out as precious as gold. Then Job began to be frightened with nightmares. It was like a big door was put in front of Job, with a huge lock and heavy iron bars. He felt trapped in darkness and in pain. Do you think God could forget His faithful friend Job?

Although Job's pain was so great, he was patiently waiting, knowing that God would one day answer. Job talked a lot with his three friends, trying to give them some reasonable explanation as to why all of this was happening to him, even though he really had none.

Eventually God did speak to Job. He said, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (38:4). Once God began to speak, Job became silent. (Many times when we are so busy talking we cannot hear God!) As he listened to God, Job quickly realized how great God was and how truly small he was. Although Job behaved himself so perfectly well at the beginning of his trial, as time went on he became angry with God and even blamed God for being unfair to him and for causing him to be so miserable. But now that he was listening to God he realized how wrong he was for blaming God for all his troubles. (They actually did not come from God, but from God's enemy and Job's enemy, the devil!). Oh, how foolishly he had spoken! How ashamed he felt! Job regretted and repented. And to show how sorry he really was, he threw dust and ashes on his head. He declared that he only knew God in an outward way before, by what he heard from others, but that now after being so sorely tried and failing the test, he had come to know God in a real way. Now he realized that during all that terrible trial God was carefully watching over him and was

secretly preserving his life and wisely allowing the test to work on him for his best good. He now realized that instead of blaming God, he should have simply trusted God and loved Him.

At the very beginning of Job's trial, all of his possessions had been destroyed. But now that Job's severe trial was over, God gave him even greater wealth. The Lord gave him twice as much wealth as he had before, plus seven sons and the three most beautiful daughters in the land. God also gave him back his high position of honor and added to him 140 years of life with his family!

However, we should all realize that all those riches that Job received after he was tested were not the real "gold" that God had for Job. The only true gold in the whole world is God Himself. Job found that to become rich in the knowledge of God is the greatest wealth. He also learned that although other gains will pass away, what we gain of God is forever.

[Scriptural references: the book of Job; James 5:11; Ezek. 14:14, 20]

## GOD CALLED ABRAHAM (1)

Satan again succeeded in corrupting the human race, just as he had done in the past. Nevertheless, God in His infinite wisdom took this opportunity to take His next step forward. Satan nearly corrupted all mankind on three occasions. First, he tempted Adam and Eve to sin, so that by this we would all lose access the Garden of Eden and the tree of life. Second, he corrupted all the wicked people who lived at the time of the flood. At that time God's judgment destroyed everything except eight persons and the animals inside the ark. When the waters finally went down, they all went out of the ark to a new earth. Now, for the third time, Satan distracted, the generations of people who came after them, who forgot God and forgot about building altars where they could offer Him sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sins.

Instead of building altars for God, man built a city and an enormous tower for themselves, the top of which would reach to heaven. The Bible tells us that they did this in order to make "a name" for themselves. Even today many people turn their back on God to make a name for themselves, to make themselves famous so that they can receive glory from men. They do this out of pride and out of vanity. That proud attitude always leads to rebellion, which is to rise up against God. By building that great tower, it is as though they were saying to God, "We don't need You and we don't want You! We can do everything by ourselves!" It is easy to see that pride always makes people very foolish in their hearts.

God was not pleased with the people's pride and their work at Babel. Finally He Himself came down to see the great city and the tower they were building. At that time, only one language was spoken on earth. Because everyone had joined together to do this great project in their independence and

rebellion toward God, they felt very self-confident and powerful.

It was not at all difficult for God to stop their construction. Although He had to judge sinful man once again, He would not do it with a flood this time. He would do it in the most curious way. He suddenly caused them to speak many different languages. Now they could not understand each other! One would ask his helper for a brick, but he could not understand him! They wondered, "What is happening here?" Because of this they could not work together any more. Soon they had no choice but to walk away and stop building the tower. How wise our God is! And this problem of not being able to understand one another because of different languages continues on even today!

At this same time that all these people were rebelling against God, we see in Genesis 12 that the Lord appeared in a strange land not very far from there, Ur of the Chaldees. In Ur, everyone worshipped false gods and idols. No one knew the living and true God; they only knew idols which had eyes but did not see, that had ears but did not hear when people prayed to them, and that had mouths but never spoke to anyone.

It was in Ur that one day the God of glory appeared to a man that He had chosen for His plan. This man was Abraham. God called him to leave that land and all his family. This calling was not to preach to the people in Ur or to improve the world around him. Instead, God called Abraham to come out of that world and to leave it behind.

This was also a call for Abraham to believe in the Lord, to trust Him, and follow Him. What God asked of him was not an easy, but this lesson of obedience was only going to be the first of many lessons that God would teach Abraham. Day by day, as Abraham followed the living and true God,

he also learned that he had to trust in Him and obey Him. When God called Abraham, He told him, "I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great ... and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:2-3). While the people in Babel struggled to make their name great, God chose Abraham and told him he did not need to struggle at all. He only needed to follow the Lord and obey Him, and He would make Abraham's name great.

And so Abraham departed, as the Lord had spoken to him. He was seventy-five years old when he left behind the city of his birthplace, Ur of the Chaldeans. He obeyed the God of glory who called him and left a lot of things behind in order to follow Him in

a life of wandering through the desert sands. When they arrived in the land of Canaan, even though Abraham and his descendants were rich, they chose not to build houses with solid roofs. Instead they chose to live in tents through which the wind always blew and the sand always crept. The Bible tells us that they chose to live this way because they believed that one day they would inherit a city whose Builder and Maker is God. While Abraham waited to inherit that city, he learned the greatest lessons, lessons we all must learn in our journey with God: to trust in Him and obey Him.

Scriptural references: Genesis 11:1 – 12:8; Hebrews 11:8-10; Acts 7:2-5



## GOD CALLED ABRAHAM (2)

After the Lord appeared to Abraham and promised him blessings, Abraham, his wife, Sarah, and his nephew, Lot, journeyed far away from his family and their home. They did not have a truck to help them in those days. Everything they were going to bring, including their large tents, had to be packed on the back of their animals. And since Abraham had no map to show him the way to the land God had promised to give him, he had to depend completely on God to lead him day by day. In this way he learned to trust in God and to obey Him step by step. Abraham became a pilgrim who lived by faith. He felt very blessed and knew that God was with him. His relationship with God was so close that he was called "the friend of God" (James 2:23).

Once Abraham came into the land of Canaan, he built an altar and called on the name of the Lord. He was so grateful to God, who had appeared to him and called him away from where he lived before. Now he was far away from the false gods and the idols of Ur. In the good land, he enjoyed living under the open heavens. Here everything was peaceful and satisfying.

The Lord prospered Abraham, and he became richer as the days went by. His nephew, Lot, who had come with him, also prospered and had a lot of cattle. Eventually, there was not enough land for them both. Although Abraham was Lot's uncle and was older than Lot, he did not take the first choice. Through his experiences with God, Abraham had learned the lesson of not being selfish and not seeking the best for himself. So Abraham let Lot choose whatever portion he wanted of the land that was set before them. Lot chose the best part of the land for himself, the part that was very green and full of pastures for his herd; he chose the well-watered plains of the Jordan. Without complaining or blaming his nephew for

being so selfish, Abraham took whatever was left. But God was pleased with Abraham's lack of selfishness, and showed him the largeness of the land: north and south, east and west. Then God told Abraham to walk through it, for it would all be his.

Although this promise was very encouraging for Abraham, it also reminded him that he still had no son and that God had not yet fulfilled His promise to make of him a great nation. Not too long after that, one night God came to Abraham and said, "Look now toward heaven and count the stars, if you can number them," and then God said to him, "So shall your seed be." Although Abraham had already waited ten long years and still saw no fulfillment of the promise that God gave him when He called him, that night Abraham believed God; He believed that one day he would have many, many descendants.

Twenty-four long years passed since God called Abraham; he was then ninety-nine years old. Sarah was also quite advanced in age, being ninety years old. If it seemed difficult to have a child when God first called them, now it now seemed impossible! But it was just then that Abraham and Sarah received a visit from three very special guests. Abraham quickly realized that these were not just three men who were visiting them, but that two of them were angels, and the other one was God Himself! God had come to visit His close friend, Abraham! Abraham quickly prepared the best meal for them. During the meal One of them asked him, "Where is your wife, Sarah?" although He knew perfectly well that she was behind the door of the tent listening to everything. Then, to the complete surprise to Abraham and his wife, He told them that they would soon have a son. Sarah heard what He said from behind the curtain,

but she could not believe the word God had spoken. Rather, since she was very old and such a thing seemed totally impossible, she laughed in her heart! Nevertheless, exactly as God had promised, the following year a son was born to them. When he was born they named him Isaac, meaning “laughter,” not of unbelief, but because of the joy that filled their hearts. This baby, Isaac, was the son of the promise that God had given them many years before. Abraham and Sarah knew that he came from God to bless them and to be the heir of all God’s promises to them.

Isaac was Abraham and Sarah’s beloved son who was born to them in their old age,

when it seemed impossible for them to have children. It can be said that Isaac was the fruit of God’s promise plus Abraham’s faith and obedience. All of us who believe in the God of Abraham should also be persons of faith and obedience. We should not only obey God, but also the people that God puts in our lives to raise us up and to guide us, especially our parents, whom God chose for our best care.

Scriptural references: Genesis 13:5-12; 15:1-6; 18:1-15; 21:1-3; Hebrews 11:11-16

## GOD CALLED ISAAC

Isaac was born with what was considered to be the greatest treasure of any son: the birthright. Since he was the son of the promise that God had given to Abraham, He would be his heir. One day all of the riches and the lands of his father Abraham would be passed to him. He was also the son with whom God had promised to establish His covenant (Gen. 17:21). Young Isaac was a comfort to his dear old father and mother; really, he grew up like a prince coming into a great inheritance.

Years later God would use Isaac, Abraham and Sarah's only beloved son, to put Abraham to the supreme test of his faith and obedience. One day God asked Abraham to return his son Isaac to Him on an altar, as a sacrifice (instead of a lamb)! Could that be possible? Could God ask such a thing of Him? Do you think Abraham could do this very hard thing that God was asking? Perhaps God chose the only man in all the world with enough faith and obedience to do it. No other human being has ever been tested like this. To be able to obey God and offer his son Isaac to Him required two things: on Abraham's part it required an absolute love for God, that is, a love with absolutely no selfishness in it at all, and on Isaac's part it required an absolute obedience to his father.

Abraham obeyed God without wavering. He could obey Him with full assurance because he believed that God must fulfill His promise to make Isaac his heir. He believed that even if he killed Isaac, God was powerful enough to raise him up from the dead (Heb. 11:19).

The following day Abraham did not linger around his tent or waste any time. Rather, he rose up very early in the morning as usual, cut the wood, prepared his donkey and, taking his son Isaac, started on his journey to the place where God had told him

to go. They walked and talked together along the way until the third day, when Abraham looked up and saw the place where he was to offer up his son. Abraham left his two servants there with the donkey and with a heart full of faith told them, "Stay here with the donkey; and I and the boy will go over there, and we will worship, and then we will return to you."

Abraham put the wood on Isaac's back, and he himself carried a knife in one hand and the fire in the other. While they walked together to the top of the mountain to the place where God had told him he was to offer this sacrifice, Isaac asked his father, "My father ... the fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham did not have many words to say to Isaac, but he said by faith, "God Himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son" (Gen. 22:8), and they continued walking up the hill together.

They finally came to the place. They built the altar together and put the wood on it. Then Abraham bound his son Isaac with a rope and laid him upon the altar on top of the wood. Everything was now ready. Then Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son in obedience to what God had told him to do. At that very moment, before Abraham had a chance to touch his son with the knife, God suddenly called from heaven saying, "Abraham, Abraham! Do not stretch out your hand upon the boy, nor do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

God gave Isaac back to his father, safe and sound. No doubt tears of joy and thankfulness filled their eyes. Then suddenly, Abraham lifted up his eyes and he saw a beautiful ram standing caught by its

horns in the bushes, ready to be sacrificed. He took the ram and offered it to God in place of Isaac. As Isaac looked on, perhaps he remembered how his father had told him on the road that God Himself would provide a lamb for them to sacrifice.

There had never been a man as submissive and as obedient as Abraham. And never in the history of the earth had there been a son as submissive and as obedient to his father as Isaac. Obedience is a

virtue that we learn when someone asks us to do something that we might not like to do. It is precisely at that moment that we have the opportunity to learn obedience. May we not miss even one single opportunity to learn this virtue that is so precious to God and so valuable among men!

Scriptural references: Genesis 22:1-18;  
Hebrews 11:17-19

## GOD CALLED REBECCA (1)

When Abraham became old he had everything a man could want, for the Lord had blessed him greatly in every way. However, there was one thing that he was concerned about: his son Isaac had not yet gotten married. Abraham knew from his own experience how very important it was for his son to marry the right woman, one who would love her husband and follow him wherever he went. This is exactly what his wife Sarah had done. When God called him to leave their land and all their family to go to the land of Canaan and start their new life with Him, she followed along with him every step of the way. With such a heavy burden in his heart, Abraham felt that he had to do something to help his son get a wife. Although there were surely many beautiful women all around them whom Isaac could have married, Abraham knew they were all daughters of the idol-worshipping Canaanites, who did not know or believe in the one true God, the God who had appeared to Abraham and called him.

As Abraham considered the situation, he knew that God did not want his son to marry a woman from that land. Thus, Abraham felt that he should get a wife for his son from among his own family, who lived far away in Mesopotamia. So he called his oldest and most trusted servant, one who had been with him and had served him faithfully for many years. This important mission was entrusted to Eliezer. Abraham made Eliezer swear that he would go to the land of Mesopotamia to bring back a wife for his son Isaac. Eliezer asked Abraham, "And what if she refuses to return back here with me? Shall I bring Isaac to her country?"

Abraham answered him, "No, do not bring Isaac back there! God called me from there and Isaac should not go back there to live. If the woman you find there refuses to

come back with you, then you are free from your vow."

So Eliezer packed up ten camels and loaded them with food and water for the long journey, as well as many very costly gifts to give to the woman he would find to be Isaac's wife and to her family. Then he and several younger men started out on their journey. They had no map to guide them on the way. They had to follow Abraham's directions, watch for different things on the way (such as mountains, valleys, rivers, and other landmarks) that would guide them, and they also had to pray to God to lead them.

They traveled for many weeks through the desert lands and, when they finally came to the land of Abraham's family, they stopped at a well to drink some fresh water and rest. They arrived there in the afternoon, when it was a bit cooler. This was the time of the day when the young women came out with their water jugs to draw water from the well and bring it back home. When Eliezer saw the young women he thought to himself, "Perhaps one of these is the one who should be Isaac's wife. But how can I know which one?" The heavy burden that Eliezer felt in his heart for fulfilling his mission was even more important to him than the thirst he felt for the water that was right before him in the well! So he prayed before he drank any water. He prayed something like this, "Oh God! If you will show your kindness today to my master, Abraham, cause something special to happen to show me if one of these young women is to be the wife of my master's son Isaac. Cause the one who is to be Isaac's wife to give me water when I ask, and cause her to even offer to give water to all of my camels!" Not many young women would offer to bring the water up from the

well to water ten camels! What he was asking God to do seemed impossible!

Just as he was finishing his prayer, he saw one of the young women coming up from the well. This well was not a mere hole in the ground where one drops down a bucket to pull up water. This was an artesian well, which is like a small pool of water. To get to the water, one had to walk down toward the pool, lower and lower, until reaching the bottom where the water was. Only then could water be drawn with a water jug.

Eliezer quickly ran to her and asked her for water to drink. She very kindly lowered her water jug and said, "Drink!" Then to his utter astonishment she said, "And I will also give your camels to drink!"

She immediately proceeded down to the well to fill her water pot and bring back water for his camels. She had to go down again and again and again. Ten camels can drink a lot of water! As Eliezer watched this

young woman in amazement, he said to himself, "Is this not the woman God has prepared for Isaac?" Surely it was! She had done exactly what he had asked God to cause Isaac's future wife to do.

So when she finally finished giving all ten of his camels a drink, Eliezer took out several precious gold bracelets and rings and put them on her and asked, "Whose daughter are you? Is there possibly any room at your father's house for us to stay?"

She explained to him that she was the daughter of Bethuel and added, "There is space for you to stay with us, and there is plenty of food for the camels also!" When Eliezer heard the name "Bethuel" he remembered that this was the name of his master Abraham's brother. Realizing that Rebecca was from Abraham's family, Eliezer was even more certain that God had chosen her to be Isaac's wife.

Scriptural reference: Genesis 24:1-27

## GOD CALLED REBECCA (2)

Once Eliezer realized that God had answered his prayer and led him to the young woman that God had chosen to be the wife of his master's son Isaac, they went right away to her house and he met all the family. They were so happy and excited to meet the servant of their dear relative Abraham! They quickly prepared a great meal for Eliezer and all those who were with him. But the burden in Eliezer's heart was so heavy that he said, "I will not eat until I have told you why I have come to see you."

They told him to speak, so Eliezer recounted to Rebecca's father and mother, as well as to her brother, Laban, everything that had happened to him during this special mission to find a wife for Isaac. They all listened attentively as Eliezer told them how God had blessed their relative Abraham and how Abraham had sent him out to the land of his relatives to bring back a wife from among them for his son Isaac. This was getting serious! They soon realized that he was talking about taking Rebecca away from them to take her back with him to the land where Isaac lived! He continued telling them his story about how when he came to the well, he had prayed to God for an unmistakable sign if any of the many young women who came out to draw water should be the wife for Isaac. When they heard how God had answered exactly his prayer, they were all astonished. They rejoiced and said, "This has all happened because of God! We can say nothing against what you ask - here is Rebecca, take her and let her be the wife of your master's son, Isaac, as God has spoken!"

Then they all ate their meal together with much peace and joy in their hearts. After a good night's rest Eliezer rose up in the morning and, to their surprise, said to them, "Now, I must go. Send me back to my master."

They felt that it was too quick! They protested! "No, you should wait for at least ten days with us so we can spend a little more time with Rebecca!"

Nevertheless, Eliezer remained firm and told them, "Please do not hold me back. The Lord has blessed my journey; send me back to my master right away."

So they replied that they would ask Rebecca herself to see what she would say. When the family asked Rebecca if she was willing to go back with Eliezer that very day, she did not hesitate one bit. She answered, "Yes, I will go!"

And that was that. So they loaded the camels again and off they went. Rebecca was willing to leave her family for she was sure in her heart that God had arranged all of this. She was not even afraid of going far away to marry someone whom she had not even met, for she knew that God was the One who was working in a hidden way to bring her to the husband He had chosen for her.

The long journey was just coming to an end as they arrived at the land where Isaac lived. And just at that time Isaac had gone out to the fields to consider everything about his life. Nearly at the same moment that he lifted up his eyes and saw the camels coming, Rebecca also saw him in the field. Eliezer told her that the man she saw in the field was Isaac. She quickly got off the camel and covered her face with a large veil. She may have done this as a sign of submission to Isaac. After Eliezer told Isaac all that had happened and how God had answered his prayer at the well, Isaac was certain that Rebecca was the wife that God had chosen and prepared for him. So he reached out to Rebecca and took her into the tent of Sarah his mother, and she became his wife and he loved her.

Scriptural reference: Genesis 24:28-67

## GOD CALLED JACOB (1)

Isaac grew up under God's blessing in everything, and, in God's time, he married the woman God prepared for him, Rebecca. Even though they had been married for some time they still had no children. It seemed that Rebecca was unable to have children. Nevertheless, Isaac knew that they were going to have children because God had promised his father Abraham that his son, Isaac, would have many descendants. Isaac believed in the God of his father and Isaac also believed the promise that God had given him. With this faith, the Bible tells us that Isaac prayed to God and asked Him to allow his wife to have a child, and that God heard his prayer and Rebecca conceived a child. However, she did not bear just one son, she had twins! Certainly the God of Abraham answered the prayers of Isaac. And these two sons were chosen beforehand by God to be two completely different kinds of people. Whatever God says He will do. And God never makes mistakes.

The twins were Esau and Jacob. Although they were twins Esau was the one who was born first. Of the two, we would surely prefer Esau. He was stronger and more generous than Jacob. He did not try to take advantage of others, as his brother Jacob did. Although Jacob always did everything in his power to get ahead of his brother, he did not know that the blessing that he so desired did not depend on his struggling and deceiving, but on God.

Jacob was a clever person from the day he was born. Actually, he was that way even before he was born! While still in their mother's belly, he and his brother were fighting so much that she finally asked God about it. God told her these two sons were going to be very different from each other, that one would be stronger than the other, but that the older one (that is, the one who was born first) was going to serve the

younger one. And so it was already decided even before they were born. When Esau was born Jacob had grabbed on to his heel! It looked as though Jacob was trying to hold him back so he could be born first. But it did not work, because according to God's arrangement Jacob was going to be born second and his brother Esau was going to be born first. No one can change God's arrangement in our lives or in our families! At that time the best part of the family's inheritance went to the firstborn son, not to the second son. But God had already made His decision, and He had chosen Jacob to inherit the birthright.

Jacob used his intelligence, his craftiness, deceit, lies, tricks, and whatever else he could think of to get what he wanted. Once, when his brother Esau came home after hunting, he was very, very hungry. His crafty brother, Jacob, offered him a delicious bowl of lentil stew that he had prepared for him, but on one condition - that Esau would give him his birthright in exchange for it! Jacob's desire to have the birthright was good, but his tricky way to take advantage of his brother was terrible!

On another occasion he even deceived his own father when he was old, blind, and about to die. Jacob's mother very much wanted him to get his father's dying blessing, instead of his brother, Esau, so she helped him steal it. She invented a very deceitful plan to work it out. She cooked Isaac's favorite dish one day to make him happy and then had Jacob put on his brother's clothes and go to his father to receive his blessing. Since Isaac was nearly blind, when he smelled the odor of the field and of animals on Esau's clothes, he believed that Jacob was Esau. So then, being deceived by his wife and his son, Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob instead of to Esau.



When Esau discovered what had happened, he was so angry that he sought to kill his brother. Jacob's tricky, deceitful nature once again got him into trouble. Even before he was born, God had already decided to give Jacob his father's blessing. He did not need to lie and deceive in order to get it! This young, tricky deceiver would need many years under God's discipline in order to change him. The Bible says, "As many as I love I reprove and discipline." Just as our parents must at times discipline us, because God loved Jacob He disciplined him by using many different people and circumstances in his life.

One who takes advantage of others, who deceives others and lies, will always have a

lot of problems, just like Jacob did. It is not good to fight and struggle to be first. Eventually, every deceiver will be discovered and every liar will be exposed. We should learn to always live a pure and honest life. And just like Jacob, we all need to learn to trust in God and to rest in Him instead of trying to take advantage of others and get our own way. And we can know with full assurance that it is never necessary to lie or cheat to get what we want. It is better to trust in God and walk quietly with Him while He does everything for us according to His own plan.

Scriptural references: Genesis 25:19-34; 27:1 – 28:5; Heb. 11:6; Rev. 3:19

## GOD CALLED JACOB (2)

As we read the story of Jacob's life we can clearly see how great was God's mercy upon him. Although Jacob was a born cheater and a very selfish person in everything (and do we believe we are better than him?), nevertheless, even before he was born God had already chosen him to be one of the fathers of His special people. Jacob was a person who always took advantage of others. This is how he "bought" the birthright from his brother one day in exchange for a single meal when Esau was so hungry he felt he was going to die. Later he lied to his blind father in order to steal the blessing Isaac meant to give to his son Esau. Esau was so furious when he found out about what Jacob had done that he decided to kill him. There was no way to fix this problem; the only way for Jacob to save his life was to leave his mother and flee from his home. His mother decided to send him far away to the land of Paddan-aram, where she came from, to be with her brother Laban and his family.

All of these painful problems happened to Jacob because he always depended on his own cleverness, tricks, and deceits to get the birthright and blessing from his brother, even though God had already planned to give them to him. It really had not been necessary for him to use his craftiness to get them. He did not know how to trust in God as his fathers had.

Jacob left his home very fearful of what Esau would do to him if he caught him. Perhaps he ran until he could run no more. Then he walked. He walked until it was night and he was so tired that he had to sleep. He lay down on the dirt and took a stone to use as his pillow. That night, while sleeping out under the open sky on a rock pillow, Jacob had a personal experience with God for the first time in his life, the God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac. God

appeared to him at the worst time in his life so far. God appeared to him in a most wonderful dream in order to comfort him, encourage him, and call him.

Jacob dreamed that he saw a ladder that was set upon the earth and whose top reached to heaven. He saw the angels of God going up and down on the ladder; but the most amazing thing of all was that he saw God on top of the ladder and God was speaking to him! He told him, "I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie, I will give to you and to your seed [or descendants]." God also promised to go with him and to keep him wherever he went, and bring him back safely to the land of his parents, and to never leave him until He had done all that He promised.

Although Jacob had heard how God had appeared to his fathers in the past, this was the first time that God had appeared to him in a personal way. From this time on he never could doubt the reality that he was one of those chosen by God as His special people. And how interesting it is that God did not appear to him when he was so comfortable in his mother's house, but when he did not have a home, a bed or anything else. When he needed God the most, the God of his fathers appeared to him and promised that He would never forsake him! He had lost the presence of his father, his mother, his brother, his home and everything else. But now he had met God! And God promised Jacob that He would never leave Him. Jacob was so impressed with this experience that when he woke up in the morning he set up the rock he had used as a pillow and poured oil upon it and called that place "Bethel," which means "the house of God."

Scriptural reference: Genesis 28:10-29:28

## GOD CALLED JACOB (3)

After his special dream at Bethel, Jacob journeyed on until he met a young lady by a well in Haran who shepherded her father's sheep. Her name was Rachel. As he helped her water the flock, he was overcome with joy when he discovered that she was his relative. When Jacob discovered that she was the daughter of his uncle, Laban, he wept and gave her a brotherly kiss. When Laban heard about the arrival of his nephew Jacob he ran to receive him and embraced him warmly. He then brought him to his home and welcomed him to stay with them. Although Jacob probably did not realize it, all of this happened to him simply because God was with him and was blessing him exactly as He had promised at Bethel. They all rejoiced as they realized that God had safely brought their relative from so far away to be with them.

As Jacob stayed with Laban's family he soon fell in love with his beautiful daughter, Rachel. Since he had nothing to offer her, he agreed to work for seven years for Laban in order to marry Rachel. Laban agreed with his offer, but he was a very tricky man. Finally, the time came for Jacob to marry Rachel, but Laban played a very clever trick on him. The wedding took place at night, when it was so dark it was not possible to see clearly. Laban craftily switched Rachel for his older daughter, Leah. The next day when Jacob discovered that he was given Leah instead of Rachel, Laban excused himself by telling Jacob that in those parts the older daughter always had to be given first in marriage, then the younger one. Poor Jacob! Now he was forced to work seven more years for Rachel.

During the twenty years that Jacob worked for Laban, he had eleven sons. After many years of not being able to bear him a child, Rachel finally gave birth to a son,

Joseph. Living and working for Laban became harder and harder for Jacob and his family. Laban required more and more from Jacob and treated him very badly. He even changed the amount of money he was supposed to be paid for his work ten times! What a hard boss he was! Finally Jacob could not bear it any longer. So he rose up and secretly took his family, flocks, and possessions and left to go back to his own country. Twenty years earlier, when Jacob was a youth, he had left home because he was afraid that Esau was going to kill him. He fled to his Uncle Laban's house for safety. And now Jacob was running away once again, this time from his Uncle Laban! Nevertheless, Jacob was one of God's chosen ones to be part of his special people. Although everything seemed so bad and so difficult for Jacob, nothing that happened to him happened by accident. Although it might not have seemed that way, actually God used all his bad circumstances to cause him to grow up. And it is the same with every one of us whom God has called. In the end we will see that when we love God everything works out for our good.

As Jacob was returning to the land of his parents he had his second experience with God. Just as the first time, it happened when he was in great fear and in a great need of God. He feared that when his twin brother Esau found out that he had returned home that he would still hate him and want to kill him.

And so it was that one night while Jacob was so fearful and alone, suddenly a Man came and wrestled with him. Jacob was so strong that he struggled with Him all night! When the Man saw that He could not beat Jacob after wrestling with him nearly all night long, He tried to get away from him. But Jacob would not let Him go. The Man

who wrestled with him finally had to do something that was very painful to Jacob, He dislocated his hip joint. Even so, Jacob still would not let the Man go, and said to Him, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" It seems that Jacob had realized that the Man with whom he was wrestling all night was not simply a man, but God Himself! It was there at Peniel that Jacob saw God, in the form of a Man, face to face, and wrestled with Him. It was also there that God changed his name from "Jacob" to "Israel," which means "one who wrestles with God" and also "prince of God." Jacob could never forget this experience with God, because, after this, he walked with a limp, with every step for the rest of his life. Even this limp

was part of the blessing that Jacob received from God.

After coming back to the land of his fathers, just as God had promised him in his dream at Bethel, still many difficulties and problems came upon Jacob again and again. At times like these it may seem like God has forgotten him! But no, God did not forget him. And He does not forget us! He could never forget us! He has chosen us and He will keep and protect us. He will bring us through all of these difficulties and problems. Then we will truly know that He is our God and we are His people!

Scriptural references: Genesis 31:1-55; 32:1 – 33:16; 35:16-20

## GOD CALLED JOSEPH (1)

Many say the story of Joseph's life is among the most interesting ever written. I think that as you read the story of Joseph's life you will agree.

When Joseph's father, Jacob, was in his old age, and already had ten sons and one daughter, another son was born to him whom he named Joseph. Perhaps because Joseph was born in his father's old age, he became his favorite son. One day Jacob made Joseph a very special coat of many colors. Of course, as Joseph's brothers saw their father's special treatment of Joseph they realized that he was his favorite son. For that reason they were jealous and hated him, and could not speak kindly to him. It is never good to give special treatment to others in a way that can stir up their jealousy and hurt their feelings.

Joseph was especially rejected by his brothers after telling them about two dreams he had. In one of his dreams he saw that he and his brothers were all in the field making sheaves (bundles) of wheat. Suddenly, Joseph's sheaf stood upright and all his brothers' sheaves bowed down to his sheaf. In the other dream Joseph said the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down before him. When Joseph told his dreams to his brothers they became angry with him. Totally disgusted, they asked, "Will you indeed reign over us?" Even his father Jacob warned Joseph not to speak of these dreams anymore. What no one knew was that God gave Joseph these

dreams and that one day in the future they would be fulfilled. God was revealing to them that one day in the future Joseph was going to reign as a king and that everyone, including his brothers, would bow down before him.

One day when Joseph's brothers had gone far away from home shepherding the sheep, Jacob sent him to see if all was well

with them and the flock, as well as to take them some supplies. Although his brothers never treated him well, he still obeyed his father and set out to look for them. When he could not find them, he did not return to his father; instead, he kept looking for them and asked anyone in his path whether they had seen his brothers. Finally, someone told him where they were. When his brothers saw Joseph coming they made a terrible plan against him. They decided that this was their chance to get rid of him - to kill him! They said to one another, "Now we will see what will become of these dreams!" When he came to them and gave them the food their father had sent them they were very cruel to him. They stripped off his coat of many colors, of which they were all envious, and then threw him into a deep pit and left him there to die.

But God was with Joseph and did not let his brothers harm him. He did this by causing his brothers to change their minds about killing him. Instead, they decided to sell him as a slave to some merchants who were traveling down to Egypt. But what could they say to their father about Joseph? To deceive their father, Joseph's brothers killed a goat and dipped Joseph's many-colored coat into its blood and brought it back to him. They told him that they found the

robe on the ground but were not sure if it was their brother's. Jacob looked it over very carefully and then exclaimed, "It is my son's coat. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces."

Jacob wept with great sorrow, and no one could comfort him. His grief was too heavy for him to bear. Now, Jacob concluded, Joseph was surely gone forever! It was impossible for Jacob to forget his grief; he would even welcome the grave.

The merchants who bought Joseph brought him down to Egypt and sold him as a slave. A man named Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, bought him. Day by day Potiphar watched Joseph's good behavior and how faithfully he obeyed everything he was told to do. After a while Joseph was given a service which the other servants envied: to serve in the house of their master, Potiphar. Here we see once again that God was with Joseph and that He caused him to prosper.

As time passed by Potiphar's wife set her eyes on Joseph and each day would tempt

him to lay with her. Nevertheless, Joseph stood firm in his pure behavior and told her, "There is no servant greater in this house than I, and my master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great evil, and sin against God?" Because Joseph always rejected her, she finally became angry with him and told her husband cruel lies about Joseph. Potiphar believed his wife's terrible lies about Joseph and became so angry with Joseph that he had him thrown into prison.

Scriptural references: Genesis 37:1-36; 39:1-20

## GOD CALLED JOSEPH (2)

Joseph always rejected the temptations of Potiphar's wife. Therefore, because he was faithful to God as well as to his master, Potiphar's wife got angry with Joseph and lied about him to her husband so that Joseph was thrown into prison. But God was with Joseph in prison and showed him mercy by allowing Joseph to find grace in the eyes of the jailer. In time, the keeper of the prison saw that Joseph was an honest and responsible person in everything. Since he felt that Joseph was a person he could trust, he put him in charge of all the prisoners.

One day two of Pharaoh's servants, his baker and his cupbearer, offended him and were sent to prison. One night, they each had troubling dreams that made them sad. In the morning, Joseph noticed they were sad and asked them why. Because Joseph was not a selfish person, he was always concerned about every person in his charge. They wished someone could help them to understand their dreams. Joseph told them that only God could interpret their dreams and that with the help of God he would interpret their dreams for them.

As always, Joseph was completely honest when he interpreted their dreams. He gave the baker the sad news that in three days he would be hung. He also gave the cupbearer the good news that in three days he would be restored to his service at Pharaoh's dinner table. Joseph begged the cupbearer to speak a good word about him when he was with Pharaoh. He wanted Pharaoh to know that he had already been in the prison for many years, but had not done anything wrong. And even though the cupbearer said that he would tell Pharaoh about Joseph once he was restored to his service - he totally forgot!

After this Joseph spent two more long years in prison. Then one night Pharaoh had

two very strange dreams. When he woke up in the morning, he was quite bothered and fearful, so he called all of the wise men in his kingdom to his palace and to tell him the meaning of his dreams. In the first dream there were seven fat-fleshed and fine-looking cows that were eaten up by seven skinny, ugly-looking cows. In his other dream he saw seven full ears of good grain that were eaten up by seven skinny, withered and scorched ears of grain. Although Pharaoh did not understand the dreams, he felt they were very important. For this reason Pharaoh was very agitated, because he did not know what they meant. And no one, not even Pharaoh's wise men or magicians, could interpret these two dreams.

At that moment the chief of the cupbearers remembered that when he was in prison and had a dream, Joseph had interpreted it correctly. He quickly went to Pharaoh and told him how Joseph had correctly interpreted his dream when he was in the prison. Pharaoh immediately sent for Joseph. Joseph stood before the powerful king, Pharaoh, and, as always, God was with him. When Pharaoh told him that he had heard that Joseph could interpret dreams, Joseph did not presume that he could do anything on his own. Rather, he told Pharaoh, "It is not of me [to be able to interpret dreams]; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

After listening to Pharaoh describe his two dreams, Joseph told him that God was showing him what He was going to do, and he explained the meaning of the dreams to him. He told Pharaoh that soon there would be seven years of great abundance of food in Egypt, which would be followed by seven years of terrible famine in all the land. Then Joseph advised Pharaoh that he should choose a wise man and set him over all the

land of Egypt during the seven years of abundance to build storehouses to store the extra grain. In this way, the people would have food and would not perish during the seven years of famine to follow.

The interpretation Joseph gave seemed right to Pharaoh and his servants, and Pharaoh realized that, in all the land of Egypt, there was none as wise as Joseph, one in whom "the Spirit of God" was. So Pharaoh set Joseph over his entire house and over all the land of Egypt. He then took his royal ring off of his hand and put it on Joseph's hand. He also put a golden chain upon his neck and clothed Joseph with the finest linen clothing. He made him the second in command of his kingdom; only Pharaoh would be higher than Joseph. He had him ride in the second highest chariot of the land, and wherever he went his servants would shout to the people, "Bow your knees!" Pharaoh told Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, yet without your consent (permission) no man will lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt." This meant that everyone was under Joseph's ruling. And beside this, he also gave Asenath to him to be his wife.

She was the daughter of a priest and was therefore a well-educated woman who would be his companion and helper.

During the seven years of abundance all the people served Joseph. They built many storehouses where they stored grain as the sands of the sea. No doubt Pharaoh and his servants admired Joseph very much. Surely he was the man that God had chosen to save the lives of everyone in Egypt. He was a very prudent, honest, and faithful person. He who was once the most trusted prisoner was now the most trusted one among the princes!

Finally, after the seven years of abundance, just as Joseph told Pharaoh, the drought came! There was no more rain and the land quickly dried up. Now it could not produce any food. The drought and the famine affected not only Egypt but also the surrounding nations. As the time passed by, people began to come from faraway places to Egypt, to Joseph, to buy food. And so at last, after many long and difficult years, Joseph's dreams began to be fulfilled.

Scriptural reference: Genesis 39:21 – 41:57



### GOD CALLED JOSEPH (3)

For seven years there must have been an abundance of rain in Egypt which allowed them to harvest much more wheat than they needed to live. The Bible records that "Joseph stored grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea until he stopped measuring it; for it was beyond measure" (Gen. 41:49). But after these years of abundance, just as Pharaoh's dream revealed, there was a terrible famine in all the land of Egypt and in the lands nearby. This included the land of Canaan also, where Jacob and his sons lived. When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, "Go down there, and buy grain for us from there, that we may live and not die." However, Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's youngest brother, with the rest because he did not want to expose him to any danger. So Joseph's ten brothers came to Egypt to buy food, along with many others who were suffering from the famine.

Joseph's ten brothers finally arrived in Egypt. By this time, Joseph was governor over all the land. Everyone could easily see that these ten men were not Egyptians. They were Hebrews who had come from the land of Canaan. The ten brothers had heard a lot about Joseph, the great governor of Egypt who controlled all of the grain in the storehouses. When they were brought before him they all bowed down with their faces to the ground to show him the greatest respect and honor. Since Joseph was very young, only seventeen years old, when his brothers sold him, they did not recognize him. His appearance had changed quite a bit after more than twenty years. They did not imagine that the great governor sitting before them, dressed in the finest linen clothing and adorned with gold, was their little brother Joseph! But Joseph recognized every one of his brothers. At that moment, Joseph remembered the dreams he had as a

youth. He remembered how his brothers' sheaves bowed down to his sheaf and how the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down before him. And now everything was being fulfilled, just as he had seen in his dream!

When Joseph saw his brothers he did not let them know who he was. Instead of simply selling them grain, he accused them of being spies and asked them many questions. He pretended not to believe their answers, especially about their father and their younger brother Benjamin. And because their terrible plan to kill him and his sale as a slave had been so serious, Joseph spoke to them harshly (angrily). He repeated, "You are spies ... you have come to see the nakedness of the land." Then he ordered them to be taken to his home and put into his prison until he could see their youngest brother. He told them this was the only way he could prove whether what they had told him was true or false. However, after three days, to the surprise of all the brothers, Joseph called for them to be brought to him from the prison and said to them, "Do this and live, for I fear God. If you are honest men, let one of your brothers remain bound in your place of custody; and let the rest of you go, carry grain for the famine of your households. And bring your youngest brother to me, that your words may be verified."

These strange events reminded them of how cruel they had been to their brother Joseph so many years earlier. So they began to talk among themselves about this. But because Joseph always spoke to them through an interpreter and not in their own Hebrew language, they did not know that he understood everything they said. Joseph was so moved with emotion by their comments that he quickly left their presence to cry. After so many years, they finally felt some

sorrow for the way they had treated him when he was young. When he returned to them he bound Simeon before their eyes and put him back into the prison until they returned. (Probably Simeon was the one who told his brothers that they should kill Joseph.) Then he added, "But don't come back without your younger brother!" After all this, they were filled with fear and could not understand all the strange things that were happening to them.

Their animals were loaded with grain, but what they did not know was that Joseph had commanded his servants to put the money they paid for the grain secretly back into each sack. When they discovered this on the way, they were scared to death! They

could not understand what in the world was happening to them! They asked one another, "What is this that God has done to us?"

When they got back to their own land they told their old father, Jacob, about all the strange things that had happened to them down in Egypt. Poor Jacob! He was filled with grief when he heard that his son Simeon was left there as a prisoner, and he felt even worse when he found out that they could not return for Simeon unless they brought his youngest son, Benjamin, with them. It looked like everything was going from bad to worse!

Scriptural reference: Genesis 41:1-38]

## GOD CALLED JOSEPH (4)

The water shortage, due to the lack of rain, and the resulting famine went on and on. After a period of time, the food that Jacob's sons brought from Egypt once again ran out. Jacob was very sad when his sons told him that they had to go back to Egypt to buy more grain and that they had to bring his youngest son, Benjamin. He feared he would never see Benjamin again. But, even so, Jacob had learned to trust God, to trust His mercy and great power, to care for them in every situation. For that reason, Jacob allowed them to take Benjamin with them and go back to Egypt, saying, "May the All-sufficient God grant you mercy before the man...If I am to be bereaved of my children, I shall be bereaved."

This time, when they arrived in Egypt, Joseph had his brothers brought to his home where a feast was set before them. Each time they bowed before him, it was with greater fear than the time before. When Joseph saw his brother Benjamin among them, he was so moved with emotion that he quickly ran to his room to cry in secret. He returned a little while later and released Simeon from the prison. Joseph seated each one of them around the dinner table in the same order in which they were born. This is probably just how they used to sit in his father's house. He had a large amount of food served to each one, but Benjamin's portion was five times larger than that of all the rest. Joseph's brothers were so fearful and confused that they still did not realize that this governor was their brother Joseph. It was surely a great feast, though it was rather uncomfortable for them.

Afterward they were all sent home, loaded with much grain once again. But this time, after they left, Joseph ordered the steward to catch up to them and to ask them, "Why have you returned evil for good?" He then asked them why they had stolen his

master's cup. With much grief, they said, "Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing! ... With whomever ... it be found, let him die, and we ourselves will become my lord's slaves." Then they opened all their sacks one by one. Finally, the steward opened the last sack, Benjamin's, and found the cup!

Now their sorrow and confusion were multiplied. They tore their clothes and returned to bow down to the ground before Joseph again, just as he had seen them do in his dreams many years before. They were completely overcome in his presence. Joseph told them that only the guilty one needed to be punished. Benjamin needed to stay in Egypt and the rest of them could go back home.

At this point Judah came forward to Joseph and poured out his sad story (through an interpreter). He explained how he had told their old father, Jacob, that they could not see the ruler's face without having their younger brother with them. Judah said, "And your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; and the one went away from me ... and surely he has been torn to pieces ... and if you take this one also from me and harm befalls him, you will bring down my gray hairs in misery to Sheol [the grave].'" After telling Joseph the whole story about how important it was for Benjamin to return to his father, Judah offered to take Benjamin's place saying, "Please let your servant [Judah himself] remain as slave to my lord instead of the boy, and let the boy go up with his brothers."

When Joseph saw Judah's absolute love toward his father, he could not control himself any longer in front of his palace servants, so he cried out, "Have everyone go out from me!" All the servants left and no one was standing with him when Joseph

made himself known to his brothers. He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it also. Then he said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?"

But his brothers were so shocked and troubled at his presence they could not answer him. Then he asked them to come near and he kissed each one and wept upon them. He explained to them that, although they had sold him as a slave, actually it was God who had sent him ahead to Egypt to preserve all their lives. He said they should not blame themselves, for it was God's doing. He comforted them, telling them that there were still five more years of famine ahead and that God was taking care of them.

When Pharaoh learned that Joseph's brothers had come to Egypt, he was pleased. Then Joseph and Pharaoh arranged to have Joseph's father, with all their other relatives, as well as all their cattle, come down to Egypt where they would enjoy its plentiful provision. They sent the brothers back to Joseph's old father in covered wagons for their journey and with many gifts for the family, especially for their father.

Finally they arrived home and told their father, "Joseph is still alive and he is ruler over all the land of Egypt."

When Jacob heard this and saw all the gifts they brought in the wagons, his heart was numb. He could hardly believe it was true! But as he listened to all they told him about Joseph and looked at the wagons that Joseph had sent to bring him back to Egypt, his spirit revived. He knew that what they

had told him was true. Finally Joseph said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die." The many years of suffering Jacob had passed through had made him very gracious; he did not blame his sons for what they had done to Joseph. Instead, he prepared to go to Joseph.

When Joseph heard that his father had arrived in Egypt, he went out to meet him. Both of them hugged one another and wept for a long time. Later Joseph introduced his family to Pharaoh, especially his grand old father who was now 130 years old. Jacob was no longer the crafty person he used to be, who took advantage of others. He was truly a prince of God. So when Jacob met Pharaoh, Jacob blessed him. On that special occasion, all could sense that the greatest person present was not king Pharaoh, but Joseph's dear old father, Jacob.

So Joseph's dreams finally came true and everyone knew that the dreams Joseph had as a young man had really been given to him by God. God alone knows what will happen in the future. He knew that there would be a terrible famine and that, to save the lives of His chosen people, He needed to send Joseph to Egypt so that during the famine he would be the ruler. Surely God's way in working it all out was beyond anyone's imagination. Although we often suffer and do not understand God's ways, we can always trust in His loving heart and His faithful Word.

Scriptural references: Genesis 43:1 – 46:7; 46:26 – 47:12; Hebrews 7:7

*These stories were originally written by our sister Naomi Ely in Santa Ana, California in 1987 and also reflect the labor of love of many brothers and sisters over the years. They were revised most recently in June 2011.*

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