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FEATURES

- More than 150 full-length articles from respected Christian counselors and scholars
- Contributors include David Powlison, Edward T. Welch, Paul Tripp, Stephen Viars, Amy Baker, Michael Emler, Elyse Fitzpatrick, Justin Holcomb, Bob Kellemen, Diane Langberg, Timothy S. Lane, Robert Jones, Marty Machowski, Deepak Reju, Joni Eareckson Tada, and many more
- Callout quotes placed near each article provide truth, hope, and encouragement to apply to life
- Over 100-word studies focusing on key words applicable to personal healing, growth, and counsel
- Book introductions including "Circumstances of Writing," "Structure," "Contribution to the Bible," and a special "Truth for Healing" section with an overview of key truths related to healing from each book of the Bible
- Wide margins for notetaking and journaling
- Robust page-end cross-reference system with over 25,000 cross-references connecting Scripture from Genesis to Revelation
- Durable Smyth-sewn lay-flat binding
- Elegant two-color interior design
- Two-column text format
- Topical subject headings
- Easy-to-read 9.5-point type size
- Black-letter text
- Footnotes
- Ribbon marker for easy referencing between pages
- Concordance
- Topical Scripture Index
- Presentation page for gift-giving
- Full-color maps

In the midst of challenging seasons of life there is hope. The *CSB Life Counsel Bible*, developed in partnership with New Growth Press, is designed to equip readers with biblical truth and counsel on a wide range of topics and tough life issues related to relationships, marriage, parenting, and more. This Bible is full of useful tools and resources for life application and discipleship grounded in the truth of the gospel of grace.

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The *CSB Life Counsel Bible* features the highly readable, highly reliable text of the Christian Standard Bible® (CSB). The CSB captures the Bible's original meaning without sacrificing clarity, making it easier to engage with Scripture's life-transforming message and to share it with others.

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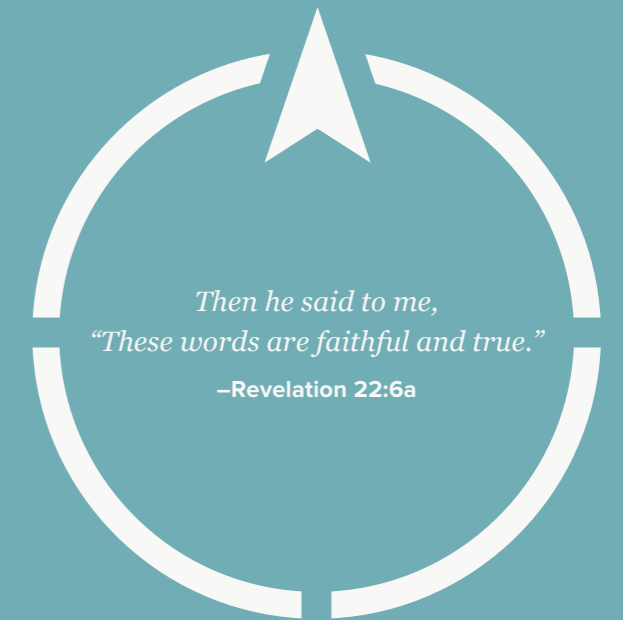
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Introduction

to the Life Counsel Bible

A simple survey of the publishing landscape will reveal that Christian counseling literature has seen a significant increase over the last several years. This growth in content not only shows attentiveness to tangible felt needs that exist both within culture and the church but also reflects the church's call to showcase how the gospel and biblical wisdom speak to personal and cultural challenges that we all face in life.

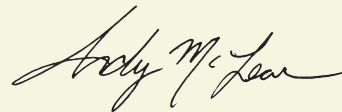
The *CSB Life Counsel Bible* was developed to add to the rich biblical literature in this space, bringing together a list of expert contributors capable of helping readers directly apply biblical principles to literally hundreds of everyday life issues in ways that are Christ-honoring, immensely practical, and pastorally helpful. Working together with our partners at New Growth Press, the *CSB Life Counsel Bible* is a resource intended for all who wish to understand how to apply gospel-centered wisdom for the purpose of sustained personal growth, holiness, and transformation at the heart and relational level over topics ranging from parenting boys and girls, learning how to thrive in suffering, understanding grief, anxiety, guilt, and stress through a biblical lens, to navigating more complex mental health challenges with oneself or with others and learning practical biblical principles for those issues. Some of the main features alongside the biblical text of the *Life Counsel Bible* include:

- **Book Introductions** – Including “Circumstances of Writing,” “Structure,” “Contribution to the Bible,” and a special “Truth for Healing” section with an overview of key themes and truths related to healing from each book of the Bible;
- **Articles** – More than 150 full-length articles on a wide range of topics and tough life issues from respected Christian counselors and scholars, including: David Powlison, Edward T. Welch, Paul Tripp, Stephen Viars, Amy Baker, Michael Emler, Elyse Fitzpatrick, Justin S. Holcomb, Bob Kellemen, Diane Langberg, Timothy S. Lane, Robert D. Jones, Marty Machowski, Deepak Reju, Joni Eareckson Tada, and many more;
- **Word Studies** – Over a hundred word studies focusing on key words from the Bible that are applicable to personal healing, growth, and counsel;
- **Callouts** – Callout quotes placed near each article that provide truth, hope, and encouragement to remember and apply to life;
- **Cross References** – A robust page-end cross reference system with over 25,000 cross references connecting Scripture from Genesis to Revelation;
- **Topical Scripture Index, wide margins for notetaking, and more.**

It is our hope that these and other features found throughout the *Life Counsel Bible* will not only show readers how to *read* the Bible for wisdom about various life topics, but also how to *internalize* that wisdom in practical ways that would lead to lasting change in their lives.

The *CSB Life Counsel Bible* would not have been possible apart from our publishing partners at New Growth Press. New Growth Press (NGP) publishes life-changing books, small group resources, and minibooks that are grounded in scriptural

truth and the gospel of grace. NGP's biblical-counseling resources apply God's Word to relationships, marriage, parenting, and counseling issues. An exclusive line of children and family products reach young hearts with the lasting truth of the gospel. NGP's goal is to provide Christian resources that are theologically robust, meet the needs of the church community, and point people all over the world to Christ. I'm especially grateful to Barbara Juliani and Rush Witt at NGP for not only their shared enthusiasm over the project, but also for the time they spent collaborating over how best to serve Bible readers with this additional material. They are leading experts in the publishing industry when it comes to titles related to Christian counseling and soul care, and I'm immensely grateful for their craft and dedication to serving the Christian community with the resources they produce.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy McLean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

What Is Biblical Counseling?

Ed Welch



Biblical counseling is a hybrid of discipleship and biblical friendship. Its occasion is when life seems painful, confusing, or unmanageable, and we turn to the Spirit and the Word for help. This anchors biblical counseling in the ancient tradition of pastoral care, which has now been dispersed to all God's people (Eph 4:11–13). Biblical counseling is not a trademarked school of thought. Instead, it rests in the public domain and grows as we all bring Scripture to the difficult details of life in a way that honors God and is exactly what our souls need.

Biblical counseling is built on a simple, enduring principle: *the triune God has spoken to us through the Scripture*, and “in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb 1:2). God has revealed mysteries about us and about his ways that are essential for life, which we could not have discovered apart from his words. To be more specific, through biblical history, God's covenant promises, doctrine, law codes, poetry, songs, which were all reaching for Jesus, *God has revealed to us everything we need to know about him, about ourselves, and about the world around us* (see 2Pt 1:3). We have access to everything that Jesus had: “I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father” (Jn 15:15). This means, at least, that Scripture has more riches than we know.

Scripture Speaks with Great Depth

Given that Scripture is revelation, we expect that it speaks with profound depth. Biblical counseling does not simply consist of a counselor finding a few pithy verses in a concordance and telling you to read them each day and pray about your problem (the counseling equivalent to “take two aspirin and call me in the morning”). Instead it is a partnership between people who are seeking God's wisdom—a wisdom that goes to the heart of the matter. It is a wisdom that can penetrate a person's inmost being (Heb 4:12).

For example, consider a husband and wife who can't seem to get out of the cycle of quarreling. Scripture alerts us to family influences on one's style of relating, culturally-derived differences in perceptions of marital roles, medical problems that leave emotions somewhat unpredictable or comprehension difficult, and lack of knowledge in how to communicate and resolve conflicts. Insight or skill development in these areas might be helpful—and God's Word is adept at offering such things.

But biblical counseling does not end here. While other forms of help can stay only on the surface, the Bible's counsel is prepared to help this couple get to the heart of conflicts. Its depth is apparent in James 4:1–4. This text indicates that conflicts and quarrels emerge when we love our own desires more than we love God. Even though this couple is probably not aware of it, their constant quarreling is revealing that they are *for* themselves, *against* the other person, and *against* God. In other words, the problem is deeper than an interpersonal quarrel. It is not just people declaring war on each other. Even more, both parties are warring against the God of love, justice, and mercy. This, indeed, is good news. Sin is not good news, but to see sin, have the opportunity to turn from it, and know God's forgiveness of sins in Jesus, is very good news.

Scripture Speaks with Great Breadth

Scripture is certainly able to speak to common problems we all encounter, such as relationship conflicts, financial pressures, guilt, shame, misery, victimization, our responses to physical health or illness, parenting questions, fears, and loneliness. But it also provides ways for us to understand distinctly modern problems such

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as depression, mania, schizophrenia, attention deficit disorder, and modern psychiatric problems. The Bible doesn't speak to each of these problems as would an encyclopedia. It is neither exhaustive nor formulaic. But through prayerful meditation on Scripture, a knowledge of people and their struggles, and the wise help of others, we find that the biblical teaching on creation, the fall, and redemption provide specific, critical insight into all the issues of life.

Too often, our attempts to apply God's words come to an end when we do not find key words in Scripture. Depression, for example, is not identified by name in Scripture, so we tend to look somewhere else for help. The problem is not so much that we look for help from sources outside Scripture. Biblical counseling is always interested in reliable observations. The problem is that Scripture seems silent, which would leave depression isolated from the hope of the gospel.

Biblical counselors begin by knowing the person. Know the person, then listen to God's good words—back and forth, with Scripture getting the final word. That is the movement of biblical counseling. When you listen to the depressed soul, you will hear someone who has found themselves in the valley of the shadow of death where everything good seems to have vanished. God himself seems to have left. This is only a first step in knowing the person, but, already, the back and forth can begin.

Misery is unmistakable, and, here, God's Word is certainly rich. "Out of the depths I call to you, LORD!" (Ps 130:1). The Psalms invite us to speak our misery to the Lord. This, of course, is much more difficult than it seems. Perhaps we need more persuading; we cannot imagine that God wants to hear. So we consider a psalm of lament, and then another. "My whole being is shaken with terror. And you, LORD—how long?" (Ps 6:3). When these invitations are accepted and depressed souls speak, the pain that separated them from God becomes the place where they know the love of the Father, the high priestly compassion of Jesus, and the presence of the Spirit. From this starting point a path through Scripture might stop at fears and anxiety, "absolute futility" (Ec 1:2), walking by faith rather than sight, and endurance. Physicians are often involved, and medication is common. These physical treatments, however, can touch the body but they cannot reach the soul. Only God's words can bring hope to the hopeless.

Our present era suggests that our deepest problems are psychological and psychiatric. This usually means that they are caused by difficult pasts or chemical imbalances. Scripture certainly calls our attention to both of these causes, and here again it goes deeper and allows us to see more. In a very real sense, all of life's problems are *spiritual*—how we worship, how we live with chemical imbalances, how we turn to Christ when we have been sinned against by enemies. All life is lived before the face of God. This is what it means to be human.

Scripture Speaks about How We Counsel

Scripture is the content of biblical counseling's message. It also reveals how we offer this content. As people called by God, we care for each other with "all humility and gentleness, with patience," accepting one another in love (Eph 4:2).

Humility means having confidence in God's promises but not in ourselves. We can misunderstand people. We can apply Scripture in a way that is not timely and wise. So we remember that we live under God and we serve others. Our own neediness compels us to pray.

Gentleness teams with compassion and surprises those who have been laid low by sin and victimization with grace that brings life and comfort to a weary or even resistant soul. After all, we follow the one who says, "I am lowly and humble in heart" (Mt 11:29), and he gives us rest.

Patience recognizes that what is most important is that we are heading in the right direction, on the right path. While on that path, each person's pace and temptations will be unique, and we do not judge based on how we might do if we had their circumstances.

All these are bundled by love that accepts others as friends and family.

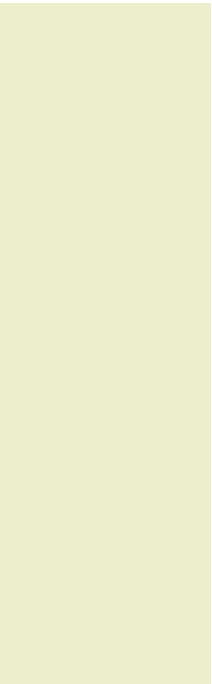
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Scripture Speaks about Who Can Counsel

Biblical counseling is not primarily a professional occupation. Pastors and professional biblical counselors, those who have special training and experience in applying the Scripture to life, may have been uniquely equipped by God to help with certain problems. However, they are not the ones who will meet the majority of the church's counseling needs. Instead, we call a friend on the phone and ask for prayer, we hear a sermon that changes us, we grow in faith when our small group comes over to help with a house project, we talk to a godly older person about parenting while we have a cup of coffee.

The issue is not professional certification. The issue is knowing and growing in Jesus as Lord and Redeemer. That is the special qualification for biblical counselors. Our tools are not special techniques and skills; instead, biblical counseling truths are available to all. As a result, it should break out whenever God's people meet together. You can find it at its best in normal, godly conversation among people who know that they need God's Spirit and the ministry of others if they are going to face another day.

*Adapted from "What Is Biblical Counseling Anyway?" by Edward T. Welch; Journal of Biblical Counseling 16:1 (1997): 2-6, a publication of the Christian Counseling & Educational Foundation (CCEF).





Do I Need Counseling?

Robert D. Jones

Sometimes the challenges of living in a fallen world become too much to handle alone. Perhaps you find yourself unable to hear, believe, and apply God's counsel so that you can function the way God designed. Or your normal avenues of informal one-another care from your church seem insufficient, and you need a trained counselor to help you. These are times when you could benefit from focused help.

What Kinds of Challenges?

- Worry, fear, anxiety, or panic attacks
- Anger, bitterness, and resentment
- Doubts about your salvation or questions about God's goodness
- Bad habits, addictions, or chronic sinful patterns
- Sexual lust, masturbation, or fantasies
- Sadness, disappointment, depression, or hopelessness
- Grief, bereavement, or other losses
- Self-harm or suicidal thoughts
- Eating disorders

Or perhaps your struggle is interpersonal and relational. Maybe you hurt someone or someone hurt you, and now feelings of distance or discomfort disrupt your relationship with that person. In particular, marriage, parent-child, or extended-family conflicts frequently need specific forms of relationship counseling.

Some problems might come from difficulties in handling suffering from general life hardships, such as natural disasters; economic downturns; accidents; or physical illness, disease, or disability. Or maybe you are suffering the impact of severe mistreatment or various forms of abuse, especially those resulting in trauma. What you did, what others did to you, or what happened to you currently haunts you.

Sometimes your problems might produce physical symptoms: high blood pressure, anxiety, sleeplessness, lethargy, gastrointestinal ailments, or loss of appetite. Those bodily symptoms, in turn, can affect your inner thoughts and feelings.

A counselor can help you sort out such issues and help you handle them.

Less Obvious Cases

Sometimes the need for counseling seems less apparent. In a south Asian country, Alyssa experienced the ravages of poverty and conflict. She came back to the US and had a hard time adjusting to the affluence of her suburban neighborhood.

Tyler lives in the apartment above his parents' garage and has no social life. His best friend is married with two children. His mom and dad say he needs a wife, but he hasn't been on a date in more than three years. He doesn't know how to proceed.

Chloe's mom was recently diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and Chloe's sister is the primary caretaker. Chloe thinks she and Derek should visit her parents more often and share the load, but Derek loves teaching his Sunday school class and doesn't like to travel on weekends.

If you aren't sure if you need counseling, a trusted friend, relative, mentor, or pastor can help you decide.

What Type of Counseling Do I Need?

This study Bible proposes an approach called biblical counseling. In one sense, everyone needs the counsel from God's Word to live the way God designed.

Our ancestors Adam and Eve needed God's counsel to help them understand their identity as his image-bearers and to fulfill his purposes for them. They listened to and enjoyed God's voice—the voice of truth (Gn 1–2). Then Adam and Eve listened to Satan's voice—the voice of evil and false counsel. They became alienated from God and one another. Yet God continued to speak to them, teaching them how to get right with him and how to navigate the hardships and effects of the fall. He mercifully promised them a Redeemer (Gn 3:15).

The competition between God's pure voice of love and the ungodly voices of the world, the flesh, and the devil have continued, and it will continue until God silences Satan's voice in final judgment and brings his people into his new heaven and earth (Rv 20–22).

Different Kinds of Biblical Help

Believers in Christ can be shaped by biblical truth in various ways—first, through our personal Bible reading. We can call this *self-counseling*: the private, prayerful study, reflection, and application of Scripture to our own lives.

We also need the *informal counseling* Christians give each other to help us grasp and live out the counsel of his Word. This includes preaching and teaching, along with one-on-one Bible reading and group Bible study. Healthy churches provide a setting where we can receive biblically consistent counsel from each other.

Sometimes we need more *formal counseling*: regular, structured meetings with a trained biblical counselor to address one or more specific problems that we and our counselor have together identified.

Practical Questions

Where Might I Find a Biblical Counselor?

Formal biblical counseling, done in scheduled sessions by a counselor with training from a Bible college, seminary, or biblical counseling training organization, might involve a church pastor or some other vocational minister (e.g., missionary, church planter, campus minister, men's or women's ministry director, student minister). Or counseling might be provided by trained lay members: men and women designated or certified as biblical counselors. In other cases, it might be a state-licensed person who counsels people biblically and is able to work within the ethical parameters of their secular state license.

Start with your pastor or small-group leader. Summarize your struggle and ask if they can provide biblical counseling or recommend someone in the church. Perhaps your church has a procedure in place where you can approach an approved counselor.

You can also search biblical counseling websites that list or recommend counselors or parachurch ministries.¹ While in-person counseling is preferable, some biblical counselors provide virtual counseling for those in more remote locations. Or you might contact local Bible-believing churches to see if they provide biblical counseling for nonmembers.

Just as you would assess any physician or professional, evaluate potential biblical counselors.

- Does the counselor value biblical counseling priorities? Do they regularly quote the Bible? Are they active members in a Bible-believing church?
- What general education and what specific biblical counseling training have they completed? Did their training include apprenticeship under an experienced biblical counselor? What certifications do they have?
- What do you know about their church or organization? Or are they counseling in private practice? Why?

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- Do they clearly explain confidentiality, financial costs, the length and frequency of sessions, the freedom to bring a friend, and other procedural matters? Are you comfortable and confident in their ability?

In some cases, you might consider a brief interview before committing to a session.

What about Problematic Psychiatric Disorders?

Perhaps your struggle involves severe mood or cognitive problems—debilitating depression, audible hallucinations, manic episodes, or panic attacks. Maybe you have been diagnosed with some psychiatric disorder by a state-licensed therapist.

Biblical counselors can play a valuable role even in these cases. First, we can remind you that God your Creator and Provider knows you intimately and cares for you deeply (Ps 103:13–18). His Spirit understands the depths of your most troubling thoughts and confused desires (Ps 139:1–6,23–24; Rm 7:14–25; 8:26–27). He knows you better than you know yourself, and he invites you to cry out to him for help.

Second, we recognize that various physical factors can interfere with daily functioning. We routinely recommend counselees go to a medical doctor to rule out medical maladies.

Third, all psychiatric problems have a spiritual dimension. Whether or not some pathology is medically discovered, and whether or not the person begins a psychotropic medication,² biblical counselors can bring clarity, hope, and encouragement through God’s Word to those facing such suffering (Heb 4:12; see Pr 20:5).

Fourth, some of these complex issues may prove to be more spiritual and internal than you realized. Biblical counseling might help decrease the troubling symptoms and grow your sense of peace, joy, and stability in Christ.

Is Biblical Counseling Confidential?

Biblical counselors regard confidentiality as a necessary component in the counseling process. Scripture prohibits gossip and prioritizes privacy and relational trust: “A gossip goes around revealing a secret, but a trustworthy person keeps a confidence” (Pr 11:13; see Pr 17:9; 20:19). Further, Jesus said, “Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do also the same for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Mt 7:12). If I want you to guard my private information, then I should guard yours.

Still, like other helping professionals, biblical counselors practice limited confidentiality. Rarely, they might need to disclose otherwise private information to appropriate people, such as civil or church authorities, if they think you or someone else might be in danger of harm or if they suspect abuse or neglect of minors or the elderly. You should clarify these matters before you proceed with counseling.

Most biblical counselors free the counselee or counselor to discontinue the process at any time without explanation. You might find that you and your counselor don’t seem to click relationally, you disagree on a significant point of Bible interpretation, or you doubt your counselor’s Christlikeness, competency, care, or confidentiality.

Is There a Fee?

If your church provides biblical counseling, those counselors normally don’t charge a fee or expect a financial contribution from members. (Of course, you might give him or her a gift card or donate to the church’s counseling fund.) If you seek biblical counseling from a parachurch center or private counselor, plan to pay. If you seek it from another church, consider a per-session donation to allow that church to provide this ministry.

What Might I Experience in a Session?

Before the first session, your counselor may ask you to review several forms. In the session, your counselor will invite you to share your background and your

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current struggles and will ask clarifying questions. He or she will make sure you feel understood.

In the first or second session, your counselor will bring you a biblical perspective about your problem and give you relevant Scripture to help you apply God's Word to your life and situation. Your counselor typically will also give you something to do—a growth assignment to help you further apply biblical truth from this session and prepare you for the next session. Moreover, your counselor will encourage you to seek support, encouragement, and accountability within your local church, or help you find a healthy one. Finally, your counselor will pray for you.

How Can I Make the Process Most Beneficial?

Commit to *biblical* counseling, eager to hear, believe, and do God's Word. Learn how God wants you to handle your life based on Scripture. Pray beforehand. Bring your Bible and a notepad to help you retain and apply the insights.

Be as open and honest as you can. Transparency can accelerate the growth process.

Be patient. Your problems did not develop in a day. Wise counselors gather thorough information. Only foolish counselors give quick answers to complex situations (Pr 18:13; 20:5).

Between sessions, complete the growth assignments, and review and pray over the matters discussed during previous sessions. Such assignments are as important as the session itself. It's like a piano lesson: the teacher corrects your bad habits and teaches you new skills, but you only learn to play by practicing the techniques.

Consider the possibility of inviting someone to join you in the sessions. That person might be your spouse, a trusted Christian friend, a fellow church member, a pastor (or their spouse), or a small group leader (or their spouse). Before the session, that person can encourage you and help you prepare. Your friend can help you understand and remember the counsel given during the session. After the session, he or she can provide you with support, encouragement, and accountability.

Along with personal spiritual disciplines like Bible reading and prayer, participate regularly and actively in the life and ministry of your local church as a complement to biblical counseling. It is important to be involved in God-centered worship that lifts your eyes to the attributes and acts of God, sound Bible teaching with practical life application, pastoral care, and meaningful small group life and other relationships with those who are also learning and displaying God's grace.

My Prayer for You

I hope that you will meet with someone who will welcome you warmly, listen to you carefully, empathize with you compassionately, and speak to you wisely. Your counselor will set before you the way of life found in Jesus Christ. He or she will select timely Scripture passages that connect to your life, will explain them clearly, and will help you apply them practically. Your counselor will know when to push you and when to support you.

I hope your counselor will depend on God's Spirit to change you, will pray *with* you and *for* you, and will help you connect well to a healthy church. He or she will work with you for the season needed, will recognize limits, will envision and plan for the day you will graduate from formal counseling, and will realize that some problems will not be fully resolved until Christ returns.

I pray you would understand the love God has for you, and as you seek help for your problems, the heavenly Father in his mercy will draw you near to himself and bring you hope and help. I pray the Lord will bring you the truths you need from his Word, and that you would know Jesus either for the first time or in a deeper way. I pray he would lead you to a biblical counselor and a local church that will bring you his life-giving grace and truth.

*Adapted from "Do I Need Counseling? When and Where to Get Help" by Lauren Whitman, New Growth Press, 2022.

See [endnotes page 1800](#).

Introduction

to the Christian Standard Bible®

The Bible is God’s revelation to humanity. It is our only source for completely reliable information about God, what happens when we die, and where history is headed. The Bible reveals these things because it is God’s inspired Word, inerrant in the original manuscripts. Bible translation brings God’s Word from the ancient languages (Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic) into today’s world. In dependence on God’s Spirit to accomplish this sacred task, the CSB Translation Oversight Committee and Holman Bible Publishers present the Christian Standard Bible.

Textual Base of the CSB

The textual base for the New Testament (NT) is the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th edition, and the United Bible Societies’ *Greek New Testament*, 5th corrected edition. The text for the Old Testament (OT) is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 4th edition.

Where there are significant differences among Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek manuscripts, the translators follow what they believe is the original reading and indicate the main alternative(s) in footnotes. The CSB uses the traditional verse divisions found in most Protestant Bibles.

Goals of This Translation

- Provide English-speaking people worldwide with an accurate translation in contemporary English.
- Provide an accurate translation for personal study, sermon preparation, private devotions, and memorization.
- Provide a text that is clear and understandable, suitable for public reading, and shareable so that all may access its life-giving message.
- Affirm the authority of Scripture and champion its absolute truth against skeptical viewpoints.

Translation Philosophy of the Christian Standard Bible

Most discussions of Bible translations speak of two opposite approaches: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. This terminology is meaningful, but Bible translations cannot be neatly sorted into these two categories. There is room for another category of translation philosophy that capitalizes on the strengths of the other two.

1. Formal Equivalence:

Often called “word-for-word” (or “literal”) translation, the principle of formal equivalence seeks as nearly as possible to preserve the structure of the original language. It seeks to represent each word of the original text with an exact equivalent word in the translation so that the reader can see word for word what the original human author wrote. The merits of this approach include its consistency with the conviction that the Holy Spirit did inspire the very words of Scripture in the original manuscripts. It also provides the English Bible student some access to the structure of the text in the original language. Formal equivalence can achieve accuracy to the degree that English has an exact equivalent for each word and that the grammatical patterns of the original language can be reproduced in understandable English. However, it can sometimes result in awkward, if not incomprehensible, English or in a misunderstanding of the author’s intent. The literal rendering of ancient idioms is especially difficult.

2. Dynamic or Functional Equivalence:

Often called “thought-for-thought” translation, the principle of dynamic equivalence rejects as misguided the attempt to preserve the structure of the original language. It proceeds by extracting the meaning of a text from its form and then translating that meaning so that it makes the same impact on modern readers that the ancient text made on its original readers. Strengths of this approach include a high degree of clarity and readability, especially in places where the original is difficult to render word for word. It also acknowledges that accurate and effective translation may require interpretation. However, the meaning of a text cannot always be neatly separated from its form, nor can it always be precisely determined. A biblical author may have intended multiple meanings, but these may be lost with the elimination of normal structures. In striving for readability, dynamic equivalence also sometimes overlooks and loses some of the less prominent elements of meaning. Furthermore, lack of formal correspondence to the original makes it difficult to verify accuracy and thus can affect the usefulness of the translation for in-depth Bible study.

3. Optimal Equivalence:

In practice, translations are seldom if ever purely formal or dynamic but favor one theory of Bible translation or the other to varying degrees. Optimal equivalence as a translation philosophy recognizes that form cannot always be neatly separated from meaning and should not be changed unless comprehension demands it. The primary goal of translation is to convey the sense of the original with as much clarity as the original text and the translation language permit. Optimal equivalence appreciates the goals of formal equivalence but also recognizes its limitations.

Optimal equivalence starts with an exhaustive analysis of the text at every level (word, phrase, clause, sentence, discourse) in the original language to determine its original meaning and intention (or purpose). Then, relying on the latest and best language tools and experts, the nearest corresponding semantic and linguistic equivalents are used to convey as much of the information and intention of the original text with as much clarity and readability as possible. This process assures the maximum transfer of both the words and the thoughts contained in the original.

The CSB uses optimal equivalence as its translation philosophy. In the many places throughout the Bible where a word-for-word rendering is understandable, a literal translation is used. When a word-for-word rendering might obscure the meaning for a modern audience, a more dynamic translation is used. The Christian Standard Bible places equal value on fidelity to the original and readability for a modern audience, resulting in a translation that achieves both goals.

The Gender Language Use in Bible Translation

The goal of the translators of the Christian Standard Bible has not been to promote a cultural ideology but to translate the Bible faithfully. Recognizing modern usage of English, the CSB regularly translates the plural of the Greek word *ανθρωπος* (“man”) as “people” instead of “men,” and occasionally the singular as “one,” “someone,” or “everyone,” when the supporting pronouns in the original languages validate such a translation. While the CSB avoids using “he” or “him” unnecessarily, the translation does not restructure sentences to avoid them when they are in the text.

History of the CSB

After several years of preliminary development, Holman Bible Publishers, the oldest Bible publisher in North America, assembled an international, interdenominational team of 100 scholars, editors, stylists, and proofreaders, all of whom were committed to biblical inerrancy. Outside consultants and reviewers contributed valuable suggestions from their areas of expertise. Working from the original languages, an executive team of translators edited, polished, and reviewed the final manuscript, which was first published as the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) in 2004.

A standing committee was also formed to maintain the HCSB translation and look for ways to improve readability without compromising accuracy. As with the original translation team, the committee that prepared this revision of the HCSB, renamed the Christian

Standard Bible, is international and interdenominational, comprising evangelical scholars who honor the inspiration and authority of God's written Word.

Traditional Features Found in the CSB

In keeping with a long line of Bible publications, the CSB has retained a number of features found in traditional Bibles:

1. Traditional theological vocabulary (for example, *justification, sanctification, redemption*) has been retained since such terms have no other translation equivalent that adequately communicates their exact meaning.
2. Traditional spellings of names and places found in most Bibles have been used to make the CSB compatible with most Bible study tools.
3. Some editions of the CSB will print the words of Christ in red letters to help readers easily locate the spoken words of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Descriptive headings, printed above each section of Scripture, help readers quickly identify the contents of that section.
5. OT passages quoted in the NT are indicated. In the CSB, they are set in boldface type.

How the Names of God Are Translated

The Christian Standard Bible consistently translates the Hebrew names for God as follows:

Hebrew original:	CSB English:
<i>Elohim</i>	God
<i>YHWH (Yahweh)</i>	LORD
<i>Adonai</i>	Lord
<i>Adonai Yahweh</i>	Lord GOD
<i>Yahweh Sabaoth</i>	LORD of Armies
<i>El Shaddai</i>	God Almighty

Footnotes

Footnotes are used to show readers how the original biblical language has been understood in the CSB.

1. Old Testament (OT) Textual Footnotes

OT textual notes show important differences among Hebrew (Hb) manuscripts and ancient OT versions, such as the Septuagint and the Vulgate. See the list of abbreviations on page XXII for a list of other ancient versions used.

Some OT textual notes (like NT textual notes) give only an alternate textual reading. However, other OT textual notes also give the support for the reading chosen by the editors as well as for the alternate textual reading. For example, the CSB text of Psalm 12:7 reads,

You, LORD, will guard us;
you will protect us^A from this generation forever.

The textual footnote for this verse reads,

^A 12:7 Some Hb mss, LXX; other Hb mss read *him*

The textual note in this example means that there are two different readings found in the Hebrew manuscripts: some manuscripts read *us* and others read *him*. The CSB translators chose the reading *us*, which is also found in the Septuagint (LXX), and placed the other Hebrew reading *him* in the footnote.

Two other kinds of OT textual notes are:

Alt Hb tradition reads ____	a variation given by scribes in the Hebrew manuscript tradition (known as <i>Kethiv/Qere</i> and <i>Tiqqune Sopherim</i> readings)
Hb uncertain was	when it is unclear what the original Hebrew text was

2. New Testament (NT) Textual Footnotes

NT textual notes indicate significant differences among Greek manuscripts (mss) and are normally indicated in one of three ways:

Other mss read ____
Other mss add ____
Other mss omit ____

In the NT, some textual footnotes that use the word “add” or “omit” also have square brackets before and after the corresponding verses in the biblical text. Examples of this use of square brackets are Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11.

3. Other Kinds of Footnotes

Lit ____	a more literal rendering in English of the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text
Or ____	an alternate or less likely English translation of the same Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text
=	an abbreviation for “it means” or “it is equivalent to”
Hb, Aramaic, Gk	the actual Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek word is given using equivalent English letters
Hb obscure	the existing Hebrew text is especially difficult to translate
emend(ed) to ____	the original Hebrew text is so difficult to translate that competent scholars have conjectured or inferred a restoration of the original text based on the context, probable root meanings of the words, and uses in comparative languages

In some editions of the CSB, additional footnotes clarify the meaning of certain biblical texts or explain biblical history, persons, customs, places, activities, and measurements. Cross references are given for parallel passages or passages with similar wording, and in the NT, for passages quoted from the OT.

Commonly Used Abbreviations

in the CSB

AD	In the year of our Lord	Lat	Latin
aka	also known as	Lit/lit	Literally/literally
Akk	Akkadian	LXX	Septuagint—an ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek
alt	alternate		
a.m.	from midnight until noon	MT	Masoretic Text
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, 3rd edn., James B. Pritchard, ed. (Princeton, 1969)	NT	New Testament
		ms(s)	manuscript(s)
Ant.	Antiquities—a history of the Jewish people by Josephus	OT	Old Testament
		p., pp.	page, pages
Aq	Aquila	p.m.	from noon until midnight
BC	before Christ	pl.	plural
c.	century	Ps(s)	Psalms(s)
ca	circa	Sam	Samaritan Pentateuch
chap(s).	chapter(s)	sg.	singular
cp.	compare	Sir	Sirach
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls	Sym	Symmachus
e.g.	for example	Syr	Syriac
Eng	English	Tg	Targum
esp.	especially	Theod	Theodotian
etc.	et cetera	v., vv.	verse, verses
ff.	following	Vg	Vulgate—an ancient translation of the Bible into Latin
Gk	Greek		
Hb	Hebrew	vol(s).	volume(s)
i.e.	that is	vs.	versus
Jer	Latin translation of Psalms by Jerome	x	times



The Old Testament



Genesis

Introduction

Circumstances of Writing

Since pre-Christian times authorship of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, has been attributed to Moses, an enormously influential Israelite leader from the second millennium BC with an aristocratic Egyptian background. Even though Genesis is technically anonymous, both the Old and New Testaments unanimously recognize Moses as the Torah's author (Jos 8:35; 2Ch 23:18; Neh 8:1; Mk 12:19,26; Lk 2:22; Rm 10:5; Heb 10:28). At the same time, evidence in Genesis suggests that minor editorial changes dating to ancient times have been inserted into the text. Examples include the mention of "Dan" (Gn 14:14), a city that was not named until the days of the judges (Jdg 18:29), and the use of a phrase that assumed the existence of Israelite kings (Gn 36:31).

The Torah (a Hebrew term for "law" or "instruction") was seen as one unit until at least the second century BC. Sometime prior to the birth of Christ, the Torah was divided into five separate books, later referred to as the Pentateuch (lit "five vessels"). Genesis, the first book of the Torah, provides both the universal history of humankind and the patriarchal history of the nation of Israel. The first section (chaps. 1–11) is a general history commonly called the "primeval history," showing how all humanity descended from one couple and became sinners. The second section (chaps. 12–50) is a more specific history commonly referred to as the "patriarchal history," focusing on the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants: Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons. Genesis unfolds God's plan to redeem and bless humanity through Abraham's descendants.

The book concludes with the events that led to the Israelites being in the land of Egypt.

Contribution to the Bible

Genesis lays the groundwork for everything else we read and experience in Scripture. Through Genesis we understand where we came from, how we got in the fallen state we are in, and the beginnings of God's gracious work on our behalf. Genesis unfolds God's original purpose for humanity.

Genesis provides the foundation from which we understand God's covenant with Israel that was established with the giving of the law. For the Israelite community, the stories of the origins of humanity, sin, and the covenant relationship with God helped them understand why God gave them the law.

Structure

Genesis is chiefly a narrative. From a narrative standpoint, God is the only true hero of the Bible, and the book of Genesis has the distinct privilege of introducing him. God is the first subject of a verb in the book and is mentioned more frequently than any other character in the Bible. The content of the first eleven chapters is distinct from the patriarchal stories in chapters 12–50. The primary literary device is the catchphrase "these are the family records." The phrase is broader in meaning than simply "generation," and refers more to a narrative account. This phrase also serves as a link between the key person in the previous narrative and the one anticipated in the next section. Genesis could be described as historical genealogy, which ties together creation and human history in one continuum.

Truth for Healing *in Genesis*

As we face the painful issues of life in this world, the question we most often hear and utter ourselves is "Why?" The best place to go to begin answering those questions is Genesis. It tells us that pain and trouble were not originally part of our natural human condition but resulted from humanity's chosen separation from God. Genesis recounts how this separation manifested itself in the lives of people from Adam and Eve to the children of Judah in ways that are echoed in people's lives today. They exhibited behaviors and experiences of fear, shame, anger, violence, frustration, greed, deceit, arrogance, hatred, lust, and injustice that we know too well. But rather

than leaving us in fatalistic despair, Genesis tells us of God's redemptive plan to heal and restore through a descendant of Adam, Abraham, and Judah.

In Genesis we also find God speaking grace and mercy into the lives of broken and struggling people like Cain, Abram/Abraham, Hagar, Jacob/Israel and Joseph. Hagar's words of gratitude and wonder have brought encouragement to countless people suffering from neglect or mistreatment by others: "So she named the LORD who spoke to her: 'You are El-roi,' for she said, 'In this place, have I actually seen the one who sees me?'" (16:13).

The Creation

1 In the beginning^a God created the heavens and the earth.^{A,b}

² Now the earth was formless and empty,^c darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.^d ³ Then God said, "Let there be light,"^e and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." There was an evening, and there was a morning: one day.

⁶ Then God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters, separating water from water."^f ⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above the expanse.^g And it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse "sky."^B Evening came and then morning: the second day.

⁹ Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into one place,^h and let the dry land appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry land "earth," and the gathering of the water he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds."ⁱ And it was so. ¹² The earth produced vegetation: seed-bearing plants according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ Evening came and then morning: the third day.

¹⁴ Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs^j for seasons^c and for days and years.^k ¹⁵ They will be lights in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night — as well as the stars.^l ¹⁷ God placed them in the expanse of the sky to provide light on the earth, ¹⁸ to rule the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness.^m And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ Evening came and then morning: the fourth day.

²⁰ Then God said, "Let the water swarm with^d living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky."

²¹ So God created the large sea-creatures

"Because Jesus rests, you can rest."



and every living creature that moves and swarms in the water,ⁿ according to their kinds. He also created every winged creature according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them: "Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters of the seas, and let the birds multiply on the earth."^o ²³ Evening came and then morning: the fifth day.

²⁴ Then God said, "Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl, and the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds." And it was so. ²⁵ So God made the wildlife of the earth according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us^p make man^e in^f our image, according to our likeness.^q They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl⁶ on the earth."^r

²⁷ So God created man
in his own image;
he created him in the image of God;
he created them male and female.^s

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth,^t and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth."²⁹ God also said, "Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This will be food for you,^u ³⁰ for all the wildlife of the earth, for every bird of the sky, and for every creature that crawls on the earth — everything having the breath of life in it — I have given^h every green plant for food."^v And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed.^w Evening came and then morning: the sixth day.

^a1:1 Ps 90:2; 102:12; Is 40:21; Jn 1:1–3; Eph 3:21 ^bNeh 9:6; Is 40:12–14; 43:7; Jr 10:12–16; Am 4:13; Rm 1:25; 1Co 11:9; Col 1:16; Rv 4:11
¹:2 Jr 4:23 ^qJb 26:13; 33:4; Ps 33:6; 104:30 ¹:3 2Co 4:6
¹:6 Is 44:24; Jr 10:12 ¹:7 Ps 148:4 ¹:9 Jb 38:8–11; Ps 33:7; 136:6; Jr 5:22; 2Pt 3:5 ¹:11 Ps 65:9–13; 104:14 ¹:14 Jr 10:2 ⁴Ps 104:19
¹:16 Dt 4:19; Ps 136:7–9; Is 40:26 ¹:18 Jr 31:35 ¹:21 Ps 104:25–28
¹:22 Gn 8:17; 9:1 ¹:26 Gn 3:22; 11:7 ^qGn 5:1,3; 9:6; Rm 8:29;
1Co 11:7; 15:49; 2Co 3:18; 4:4; Eph 4:24; Col 1:15; Jms 3:9 ¹Gn 9:2;
Ps 8:6–8; Jms 3:7 ¹:27 Gn 5:2; Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6 ¹:28 Gn 9:1,7
¹:29 Gn 9:3; Ps 104:14–15; 136:25; 145:15–16 ¹:30 Ps 147:9
^w1:31 1Tm 4:4

^A1:1 Or *created the universe* ^B1:8 Or *"heavens."* ^C1:14 Or *for the appointed times* ^D1:20 Lit *with swarms of*
^E1:26 Or *human beings*; Hb *'adam*, also in v. 27 ^F1:26 Or *as* ^G1:26 Or *scurry* ^H1:30 *I have given* added for clarity

Sabbath Rest

Trusting God with Your “To-Do” List



Winston T. Smith

There is one very important reason to slow down and rest. God commands it. In fact, resting is so important that it is one of the Ten Commandments. The fourth commandment reads, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: You are to labor six days and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God” (Ex 20:8–10). The word *Sabbath* comes from the Hebrew word for “ceasing” or “stopping.” You may already be familiar with the idea of “Sabbath” from Sunday school or from hearing your parents or grandparents mention it, but have you ever wondered why God thinks that having a day of “stopping” is important enough to be one of the Ten Commandments?

The first instance of Sabbath in the Bible features God himself resting. In the opening chapter of Genesis, God creates everything that exists in six days: light and darkness, moon, sun, stars, land and sea, plants, animals, and human-kind. Chapter 2 begins, “So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed. On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested from all his work of creation” (Gn 2:1–3).

Every act of creation required nothing more of God than a spoken word: “Then God said.” God isn’t toiling in sweat and anguish—just the opposite. Every creative act began with a word and ended with the pronouncement, “And God saw that it was good.”¹

You may be so familiar with the story of creation that it no longer astounds you, but you can be sure that the original audience would have been amazed at the God of Genesis 1. The ancient world was completely unfamiliar with the notion of one God who created and ruled over all things. They were preoccupied with how *many* gods existed, who they were, and what their roles were. So the creation stories of other cultures were strikingly different from the one in Genesis.² God’s day of rest is a demonstration of his absolute mastery and the happy obedience of his creation. His rest isn’t a picture of tiredness, but a display of his absolute sovereignty.

I Can’t Manage My Checkbook in Six Days, Much Less the Universe

So what’s the connection between God’s day of rest and the rest we are commanded to observe? The Bible explains that God’s people are to observe this rest in imitation of him (Ex 20:11). To hear this as a call to imitate God, you need to remember that God made humankind in his “image” (Gn 1:27), that is, as his representatives on earth. As his image bearers we must serve God and live in a way that represents him well. In part, our Sabbath rest serves as a symbol of *his* Sabbath rest, an ongoing image of his power and glory.

God’s command to rest forces us to acknowledge that God isn’t just in perfect control of *his* world, but *ours* as well. Resting means acknowledging that our world really belongs to him, and we must entrust our well-being into his hands. If you rest for a day, will God keep your life from falling apart? In this sense, we can see how rest is an exercise in faith. Resting should be a way of living out the truth that our world belongs to God. We must trust that he is in loving control of it.

Take the Whole Year Off!

God’s command to rest goes far beyond a command to set aside one day a week. In addition to a Sabbath day, God required Israel to set aside entire *years* as

Sabbaths. Every seventh year was to be a Sabbath year in which no crops were to be planted or harvested (see Lv 25:1–7). According to law of Moses, food may be taken directly from the fields, but not planted or harvested in any systematic way. The Sabbath year is a time for the land to rest. No doubt it benefits the soil to lie fallow so agricultural nutrients can be restored, but if that were all God had in mind, he certainly could have explained it that way. The fact that this is considered a Sabbath “to the LORD” alerts us to a deeper significance, which becomes clearer a few verses later when God anticipates Israel’s reaction: “If you wonder, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year if we don’t sow or gather our produce?’ ” (Lv 25:20). It’s easy to understand Israel’s concern, isn’t it? Is God asking us to starve?

Again, the Sabbath reveals our hearts. You have enough faith to rest for one day a week. Now rest for an entire year. Do you really trust God to care for you or, when push comes to shove, do you only trust God with life’s incidentals? God graciously answers our questions before they come to our lips: “I will appoint my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it will produce a crop sufficient for three years. When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating from the previous harvest. You will be eating this until the ninth year when its harvest comes in” (Lv 25:21–22).

The Promises of Rest

But these Sabbaths were intended to do more than stretch our faith. They are also laced with sweet and comforting promises. In addition to weekly Sabbaths and Sabbath years, God commanded Israel to observe a “Jubilee” year every fiftieth year.³ The Jubilee year points to even deeper truths embedded in “resting.” The year would begin with the sound of a special trumpet sounded on the Day of Atonement, the day when the high priest would make sacrifices for the sins of all the people. God explains, “You are to consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim freedom in the land for all its inhabitants” (Lv 25:10a). As in a normal Sabbath year, the land was to lie fallow. Crops could not be planted or harvested; only what was taken directly from the fields could be eaten (Lv 25:12).

In addition, the Israelites were to perform certain acts of “redemption.” First, in the year of Jubilee, any land that had been sold was to go back to its original owner. Second, as a servant to another Israelite or a slave to an alien, in the year of Jubilee servant and slave were to be freed to go back to their own land (Lv 25:54–55). Sabbath as freedom from slavery doesn’t just apply to the year of Jubilee. It was also part of the weekly Sabbath as well (Dt 5:15).

Don’t let language about land, servants, and slaves distract you from the spiritual truths that apply to us as God’s people today, no matter our cultural distance from Israel. What should these practices communicate to us? Simply put, God intends for us to be free. The focus and purpose of all of our labor, ultimately, is to serve him. God has a place for us and he will always lead us there. God takes the enslaved and restores the created order of things by settling *his* people in *his* land.

Jesus, Our Sabbath Rest

Like Adam and Eve, we want to hide from our deep sense of inadequacy. How much of *our* busyness is really an effort to prove our worth and escape the sense that there is something very wrong with us? Complicating matters further, when God confronted Adam and Eve, he cursed the very things in which men and women would seek to find their worth (Gn 3:16–19). The very things we would hope to give us meaning and worth have been cursed so that to be “fruitful” in them will require extreme effort. You may try to take pride in your work; you may try to find life and meaning in your children, but God isn’t going to make it easy for you.

What’s going on here? How can God argue for Sabbath rest on the one hand but promise to frustrate our work on the other? The answer is that God wants us to find our rest in him, not in our own proud efforts. He won’t allow us to successfully cover ourselves. He faithfully and lovingly steers us away from trusting in our own efforts so that we can find true rest in the work *he* has done.

The problem of being morally corrupt and sinful can't be solved by working harder. Who can do the work that won't just cover up the symptoms but really fix *who we are*? Jesus has done the work required to clean up the filth in our hearts, to purify us and make us acceptable before God. To use the imagery of Sabbath, he has set us free from the slavery of sin. He has allowed us to return home.

Jesus really did do our work for us in living a life perfect in every regard, keeping the whole of God's law, and paying the penalty for our countless violations. God has truly credited us with Jesus's perfection and success. By trusting in Jesus, we are spiritually joined to him so that not only his credit, but also his very nature begins to take over ours. This is the amazing Sabbath we are to rest in. Not simply rest *from* our own efforts, but rest *in* Jesus's finished work for us.

Conclusion: Practical Strategies for Change

Thoughtful and sincere Christians may disagree on what day and how Sabbath should be observed. But it is clear that God's people should be characterized by an attitude of Sabbath. Here are a few ways to build Sabbath into your life:

- *Become a devoted admirer of Christ.* The more deeply you appreciate and worship Christ in his perfection, the more confidence you will have in him. You will become less likely to trust in yourself. Rest must be rooted in faith. Don't try to simply plug rest into the problem. Be worshipful.
- *Repent of the pride that says, "If I don't do it, who will?"* We are a strange mixture of fear, pride, and rebellion. Fear and inadequacy are not the opposites of pride, but its fruit. Pride drives our attempts to fix problems ourselves rather than accepting what God has done. Pride tells us to trust in ourselves rather than God.
- *Don't get in Jesus's way by being overly responsible.* Allow others to experience their need for Christ. Know the difference between mercifully helping someone with his responsibility versus taking it on as your own.
- *Be a student of your own heart.* Countless motivations can drive us. What desires or fears keep you from resting? Do you live for the approval of others? Believing that your worth comes from others' approval is slavery. Do you fear their disapproval, bask in their praise, or both?
- *Instead of being guilt-ridden about not having regular quiet times, carve out daily times to "rest in the Lord."* Don't think of prayer simply as presenting God with a list of requests, but as a time to be quiet before him and thank him for his work. Don't read the Bible as a task, but as a time to be quiet and let God speak. Think about what it would look like to rest before him as an act of worship.

Because Jesus rests, you can rest. Jesus's resurrection is one reason many Christians choose to observe a Sabbath on Sundays, the first day of the week, rather than Saturdays, the last day of the week. Jesus's death and resurrection embody the promises of Sabbath. His resurrection is the promise of new life, a new start—a picture and promise of the new life we have now and will have forever when Jesus returns and we are resurrected as well.

*Adapted from "Burned Out? Trusting God with Your 'To-Do' List" by Winston T. Smith (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010)

See endnotes page 1800.



“We are to respond to our spouse as a mirror of and expression of gratitude for how Christ loves us. The marriage covenant is a picture of the salvation covenant. Our spouse should be a primary beneficiary of our worshipful response . . . to the gospel.”

2 So the heavens and the earth and everything in them were completed.^{a 2} On the seventh^A day God had completed his work that he had done, and he rested^B on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.^{b 3} God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, for on it he rested^C from all his work of creation.^d

Man and Woman in the Garden

⁴ These are the records^e of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation. At the time^C that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,⁵ no shrub of the field^f had yet grown on the land,^g and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.⁶ But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground.⁷ Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground^g and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils,^h and the man became a living being.ⁱ

⁸ The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east,^j and there he placed the man he had formed.⁹ The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden,^k as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.^l

¹⁰ A river went^e out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers.^{f 11} The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah,^{g,m} where there is gold.¹² Gold from that land is pure;ⁿ bdellium^l and onyx^l are also there.¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush.¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris,^o which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.^o

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.¹⁶ And the LORD God

commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden,^{p 17} but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”^{q 18} Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding^r to him.”¹⁹ The LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it.⁵ And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.²⁰ The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man^k no helper was found corresponding to him.²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man,^t and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place.²² Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.^{u 23} And the man said:

This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “woman,” for she was taken from man.^v

²⁴ This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.^{w 25} Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

The Temptation and the Fall

3 Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’^x”

² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden.³ But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’^y”

⁴ “No! You will certainly not die,” the serpent said to the woman.^{z 5} “In fact, God knows that when^l you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God,

^a2:1 Neh 9:6; Ps 33:6; Is 34:4; 45:12 ^b2:2 Ex 20:8–11; 31:17; Dt 5:12–14; Heb 4:4 ^c2:3 Ex 31:17 ^dEx 20:11; 31:17; Ps 121:2 ^e2:4 Gn 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1,9; 37:2 ^f2:5 Gn 1:11–12 ^g2:7 Gn 3:19,23; 18:27; Ps 103:14; Ec 12:7; 1Co 15:47 ^hGn 7:22; Jb 33:4; Is 2:22 ⁱ1Co 15:45 ^j2:8 Gn 13:10; Is 51:3; Ezk 28:13; 31:8; Jl 2:3 ^k2:9 Gn 3:22; Rv 2:7; 22:2,14 ^lPr 3:18 ^m2:11 Gn 10:7,29; 25:18; 1Sm 15:7 ⁿ2:14 Dn 10:4 ^oGn 15:18 ^p2:16 Gn 3:1–2 ^q2:17 Gn 3:5; Dt 30:15,19–20; Rm 6:23; 1Tm 5:6; Jms 1:15 ^r2:18 Pr 31:11–12; 1Co 11:9; 1Tm 2:13 ^s2:19 Ps 8:6 ^t2:21 Gn 15:12 ^u2:22 1Co 11:8,12 ^v2:23 Eph 5:28–30 ^w2:24 Mal 2:15; Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7–8; 1Co 6:16; Eph 5:31 ^x3:1 Mt 10:16; 2Co 11:3; Rv 12:9; 20:2 ^y3:3 Gn 2:17 ^z3:4 Jn 8:44

^A2:2 Sam, LXX, Syr read *sixth* ^B2:2 Or *ceased*, also in v. 3 ^C2:4 Lit *creation on the day* ^D2:5 Or *earth* ^E2:10 Or *goes*
^F2:10 Lit *became four heads* ^G2:11 Or *of the Havilah* ^H2:12 Lit *good* ^I2:12 A yellowish, transparent gum resin
^J2:12 Identity of this precious stone uncertain ^K2:20 Or *for Adam* ^L3:5 Lit *on the day*

Building a Marriage to Last

Five Essential Habits for Couples

Brad Hambrick



Regardless of your situation, it's never too early—or too late—to build habits that will strengthen and grow your marriage. The reality is that you are going to forge habits in your marriage, whether you intend to or not. Habits happen as we do life. In the months ahead you are either going to *intentionally cultivate habits* that foster a healthier, more God-honoring marriage, or hope you don't *drift into habits* that result in imbalanced priorities and subsequent conflicts.

Habit-forming is inevitable, but intentionality can make it beneficial. Whatever your season of life or condition of your marriage, one thing is guaranteed: if you neglect the principles here, it will be difficult for your marriage to thrive.

Five Essential Practices for Couples

In this article, we're going to consider five basic categories of healthy marriage habits, covering a wide range of personal, relational, and spiritual needs: (1) Stewarding the Basics, (2) Thriving Personally, (3) Honoring Relationally, (4) Knowing Deeply, and (5) Worshiping Truly.

The idea of **stewarding** comes first because it reveals that all of life, including marriage, is a gift given to us by God for a purpose. Our goal with "stewarding the basics" is to discern how God would have us care for our marriages to accomplish his purpose *in each member of our family, in each season of life*.

Thriving prompts us to remember that, unlike God, we are finite creatures who require certain essential elements in order to be healthy. Even before humanity was sinful (Gn 3), we were finite (Gn 1–2). People needed sleep and food even before there was a reason to repent. Here we will challenge each other to care for ourselves physically and emotionally so that our shortcomings in marriage do not stem from a lack of basic personal care.

Honoring calls us to be mindful that we are not just finite, but also sinful people who do not naturally think of others first (Rm 3:23). We want our way and are too often willing to mistreat those we love to get our way (Jms 4:1–6). That's not a pretty picture of the human heart, but it's an accurate one. Any discussion of a God-honoring marriage must be rooted in this kind of gospel-dependent self-awareness.

The idea of **knowing** points out that marriage requires us to be lifelong students of an ever-changing spouse. You may have heard it said, "You will be married to dozens of people over the course of your marriage." Life changes both of you. Loving your spouse entails *perpetually learning* what is more important, most challenging, and most satisfying for him or her.

Worshipping opens our eyes to see that life is not a meaningless game where the people who have the most fun and experience the least pain win. Our lives were designed to glorify God. When we lose sight of this, godly habits begin to feel like a competitive disadvantage or an arbitrary theological list of rules.

Now that we understand the purpose and order behind these essential practices, let's explore how we can build the habits of stewarding, thriving, honoring, knowing, and worshipping.

Stewarding the Basics

Marriage is not so much complicated as it is difficult. We know the destructive factors that will put a strain on our marriage, and tell other people to avoid those pitfalls. But we often dismiss important, basic marriage principles as cliché. Knowing you should work out is not the same thing as actually sweating for

thirty minutes three times a week. Let's talk about three basic commodities you need to manage well in your marriage: time, money, and community.

Time. Let's start with this simple fact: you can't cram 200 hours' worth of activity into a 168-hour week and have a healthy marriage. *Think monthly instead of daily or weekly.* At the beginning of every month, look at your calendars together and make sure all five habit areas are present in your schedule. Make sure the things you say "yes" to are the primary things that force you to say "no" to secondary priorities. Not every healthy practice will be represented in every week of your schedule. But, if every healthy habit isn't represented in every month, you don't actually have habits; you have good intentions. Using a family meal calendar is a great way to begin to think monthly.

Money. This idea is pretty straightforward. *Have a budget.* If, according to most surveys, the leading cause of divorce is financial problems, it would be naïve to avoid this topic. If you think of a budget as good intentions scribbled on a steno pad, learn what it means to have a working financial plan that takes less than thirty minutes a week to maintain.

Community. *Seek out friends who model and spur you toward a healthy marriage.* Your spouse should be your best friend, but not your only friend. Your spouse can't replace your church. But because God created marriage after saying, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gn 2:18), we often think of marriage as God's cure for loneliness. But God has made it clear that we are a part of the body of Christ and that we need to be in relationships with fellow believers for mutual encouragement and growth (Heb 10:24–25).

Thriving Personally

Marriage is a marathon. It is a relationship that spans decades. Good self-care is a wise component of any endurance endeavor. Your marriage will not be healthier than you are . . . at least not for long. We all know we can push the limits for a "busy season," but if we overextend as a lifestyle, we crash.

Establish healthy physical and emotional care habits. Look over your sleeping, eating, and exercising patterns. Are you caring for your body in a way that sets you up to care for your spouse? What one or two changes would make the biggest difference?

Now consider the unique challenges of your current season of life. Are you in graduate school, raising kids, or in a demanding job? Ask yourself, "Is there anything I need to change to have the energy and focus to engage with my spouse?" No one sees your spouse's day-in-day-out routine and how it impacts him or her like you do.

Honoring Relationally

We will consider four put-off habits (Eph 4:22) for honoring one another relationally: **criticism**, **contempt**, **defensiveness**, and **stonewalling**. These four communication patterns have been identified by marriage researcher John Gottman as the most accurate predictors of divorce.¹

- *Avoid criticism*—This doesn't mean you never express dissatisfaction or disappointment to your spouse. It means you articulate your frustration with a focus on the action or situation rather than the person. Instead of saying, "You never think of me," you might say, "It's frustrating when we're consistently late. It makes me wonder what is most important to you. Can we talk about this?"
- *Avoid contempt*—We can express contempt by mocking, name-calling, disrespectful body language (e.g., eye-rolling), or talking down to our spouses. At its best, contempt displays high levels of immaturity. At its worst, contempt reveals the early stages of an emotionally abusive relationship.²
- *Avoid defensiveness*—The more one spouse is critical, the more the other spouse is likely to gravitate toward defensiveness. But criticism does not excuse defensiveness. Common defensive strategies include playing

the martyr and shifting the blame. Christians, more than anyone else, should be able to accept responsibility where appropriate and admit our faults. After all, acknowledging our sinful condition was a prerequisite of salvation.

- **Avoid stonewalling**—This is when we shut down and stop talking to our spouse about what is upsetting. The longer we stonewall, the more emotionally difficult stuff there is to face and the less capable we feel of facing it. *A good marriage requires the willingness to talk maturely about hard things.*

A summary term for the alternative to destructive patterns is **honor**. When we are disappointed, hurt, or offended in marriage, the mature Christlike response is to move toward our husband or wife in humility, express our concern in a way that builds him or her up, and maintain a posture that prioritizes “us” over “it” (meaning, the marriage as more important than the subject). *When we lack the ability to discuss with honor what offends us, then our lack of self-control should be a greater concern than our spouse’s offense.*

A way to define honor during conflict is to *accurately represent your spouse’s words and actions in both tone and content*. We don’t like it when people assign motives to our actions, claim to know what we were thinking, mock our statements, or misrepresent our words. These things are forms of dishonor. Honor during conflict requires dying to self (Lk 9:23–24) to avoid these tendencies when you disagree with your spouse. We begin to realize why *listening is most difficult when it is most needed*.

Knowing Deeply

This is where we start to get romantic. In a healthy marriage we should be *fully known and fully loved*. We will split this habit into two sections: everyday knowing and special-occasion knowing. **Everyday knowing** includes practices you incorporate into your normal rhythms of life so that you are regularly investing in the things that are important to your spouse. **Special-occasion knowing** describes occasions where you pour more time and energy into the things that are important to your spouse (i.e., birthdays, anniversaries, Valentine’s Day, marriage getaway trips, etc.). Take some time during a date night to discuss personal “knowing” questions with your spouse.

Worshipping Truly

Marriage is about something bigger than ourselves. We are to respond to our spouse as a mirror of and expression of gratitude for how Christ loves us (see Eph 5:21–33). The marriage covenant is a picture of the salvation covenant. Our spouse should be a primary beneficiary of our worshipful response (i.e., awe, gratitude, and obedience) to the gospel. Accordingly, we will look at two ways worship-based motivation can become habit.

The first practice is *expressing gratitude for the opportunity to grow*. Whenever something worthwhile is hard, let your first response be a simple “thank you” prayer. Allow honesty about the challenge to be part of the “thank you.” Allow gratitude to take you back to worship. Thank God for the character-formation work he is doing in your life through marriage. That’s sanctification.

The second practice is *having enthusiasm in the moments of growth*. Hopefully, the gratitude habit (i.e., responding to hardship without grumbling) makes this enthusiasm habit (i.e., excitement for what God can do in that hard time) seem more natural. After a thank-you prayer, you should be able to more naturally shift your mindset from, “Here we go again” (i.e., dread) to “Here’s our chance” (i.e., opportunity). People get married because they can do good times well (i.e., laugh, tell stories, and go on dates). People stay married and flourish in marriage when they do hard times well (i.e., respond with honor in conflict and navigate unpleasant emotions). Marriages that flourish respond to the difficult moments of life as opportunities to honor God and each other.

Conclusion

Are you asking your marriage to fulfill you in a way that only God can? When marriage has taken on a weight it cannot bear, we honor our marriage best by depending on it less. This is the principle that C. S. Lewis so succinctly stated, "Put first things first and we get second things thrown in: put second things first and we lose both first and second things."³

Allow the first thing, a thriving relationship with God, to be first and then second things, such as a thriving relationship with your spouse, will have every opportunity to flourish. Ask your marriage to fulfill you like only God can and both relationships will crumble. Never replace the Giver with the gift. Instead, honor the Giver by cultivating all the joy he wanted you and your spouse to have when the gift was given.

^{*}Adapted from "Building a Marriage to Last: Five Essential Habits for Couples" by Brad Hambrick (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2020).

See endnotes page 1800.

knowing good and evil." ⁶ The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Sin's Consequences

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze,^a and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ And he said, "I heard you^b in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

¹¹ Then he asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

¹² The man replied, ^c "The woman you gave to be with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate."

¹³ So the LORD God asked the woman, "What have you done?"

And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."^d

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent:

Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than
any livestock
and more than any wild animal.
You will move on your belly
and eat dust all the days of your life.^e

¹⁵ I will put hostility between you
and the woman,
and between your offspring
and her offspring.^c
He will strike your head,
and you will strike his heel.^f

¹⁶ He said to the woman:
I will intensify your labor pains;
you will bear children with painful
effort.^g
Your desire^h will be
for your husband,
yet he will rule over you.

¹⁷ And he said to the man, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'Do not eat from it':

The ground is cursed
because of you.ⁱ

You will eat from it by means of
painful labor^o
all the days of your life.

¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles
for you,
and you will eat the plants
of the field.^j

¹⁹ You will eat bread^e by the sweat
of your brow
until you return to the ground,^k
since you were taken from it.
For you are dust,
and you will return to dust."^l

^a3:6 1Tm 2:14; Jms 1:14–15; 1Jn 2:16 ^b3:8 Jb 34:22–23

^c3:12 Jb 31:33; Pr 28:13 ^d3:13 Rm 7:11; 2Co 11:3; 1Tm 2:14

^e3:14 Is 65:25; Mc 7:17 ^f3:15 Heb 2:14; 1Jn 3:8 ^g3:16 Jn 16:21;

1Tm 2:15 ^hGn 4:7 ⁱ3:17 Gn 5:29; Rm 8:20–22; Heb 6:8 ^j3:18 Gn 2:5

^k3:19 Ps 90:3; 104:29; Ec 12:7

^a3:8 Lit at the wind of the day ^b3:10 Lit the sound of you ^c3:15 Lit your seed and her seed ^d3:17 Lit it through pain
^e3:19 Or food

²⁰ The man named his wife Eve^a because she was the mother of all the living. ²¹ The LORD God made clothing from skins for the man and his wife, and he clothed them.

²² The LORD God said, “Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever.”^a ²³ So the LORD God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.^b

Cain Murders Abel

4 The man was intimate with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. She said, “I have had a male child with the LORD’s help.”^b ² She also gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel became a shepherd of flocks, but Cain worked the ground. ³ In the course of time Cain presented some of the land’s produce as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also presented an offering — some of the firstborn of his flock and their fat portions.^d The LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,^e ⁵ but he did not have regard for Cain and his offering. Cain was furious, and he looked despondent.

⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you furious?^f And why do you look despondent? ⁷ If you do what is right, won’t you be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”^g

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, “Let’s go out to the field.”^c And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.^h

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s guardian?”

¹⁰ Then he said, “What have you done? Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground!”ⁱ ¹¹ So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood you have shed. ¹² If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.^j

¹³ But Cain answered the LORD, “My punishment^k is too great to bear! ¹⁴ Since you are banishing me today from the face of

the earth, and I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me.”^k

¹⁵ Then the LORD replied to him, “In that case,^f whoever kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” And he placed a mark^l on Cain so that whoever found him would not kill him. ¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod,^g east of Eden.

The Line of Cain

¹⁷ Cain was intimate with his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Enoch. Then Cain became the builder of a city, and he named the city Enoch after his son. ¹⁸ Irad was born to Enoch, Irad fathered Mehujael, Mehujael fathered Methushael, and Methushael fathered Lamech. ¹⁹ Lamech took two wives for himself, one named Adah and the other named Zillah. ²⁰ Adah bore Jabal; he was the first^h of the nomadic herdsmen. ²¹ His brother was named Jubal; he was the first^h of all who play the lyre and the flute. ²² Zillah bore Tubal-cain, who made all kinds of bronze and iron tools. Tubal-cain’s sister was Naamah.

²³ Lamech said to his wives:

Adah and Zillah, hear my voice;
wives of Lamech, pay attention
to my words.

For I killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.

²⁴ If Cain is to be avenged
seven times over,
then for Lamech it will be
seventy-seven times!

²⁵ Adam was intimate with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, for she said, “God has given^l me another offspring^j in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” ²⁶ A son was born to Seth^m also, and he named him Enosh. At that time people began to call on the name of the LORD.ⁿ

The Line of Seth

5 This is the document containing the family^k records^o of Adam. ¹ On the day that God created man,^m he made him in the likeness of God; ² he created them male and

^a3:22 Gn 2:9; Rv 2:7 ^b3:24 Ex 25:18–22; Ps 104:4; Ezk 10:1–20; Heb 1:7 ^c4:3 Ex 23:19; 34:26; Neh 10:35 ^d4:4 Ex 13:12; Nm 18:17; Pr 3:9 ^eHeb 11:4 ^f4:6 Jnh 4:4 ^g4:7 Gn 3:16 ^h4:8 Mt 23:35; Lk 11:51; 1Jn 3:12–15; Jd 11 ⁱ4:10 Nm 35:33; Dt 21:1–9; Heb 12:24; Rv 6:9–10 ^j4:12 Dt 28:16–18; Is 26:21 ^k4:14 Nm 35:26–27; ^l4:15 Ex 9:4; Ezk 9:4,6; Rv 13:16–17 ^m4:26 Lk 3:38 ⁿGn 12:8; 26:25; 1Kg 18:24; Ps 116:17; Jl 2:32; Zph 3:9; 1Co 1:2 ^o5:1 Gn 2:4

^a3:20 Lit *Living, or Life* ^b4:1 Lit *the LORD* ^c4:8 Sam, LXX, Syr, Vg; MT omits “Let’s go out to the field.” ^d4:11 Lit *blood from your hand* ^e4:13 Or *sin* ^f4:15 LXX, Syr, Vg read “Not so!” ^g4:16 Lit *Wandering* ^h4:20, 21 Lit *father* ⁱ4:25 The Hb word for *given* sounds like the name “Seth.” ^j4:25 Lit *seed* ^k5:1 Lit *written family* ^l5:1 Or *mankind* ^m5:1 Or *Adam, human beings*

female. When they were created, he blessed them and called them mankind.^a

³ Adam was 130 years old when he fathered a son in his likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ Adam lived 800 years after he fathered Seth, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ⁵ So Adam's life lasted 930 years; then he died.

⁶ Seth was 105 years old when he fathered Enosh. ⁷ Seth lived 807 years after he fathered Enosh, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ⁸ So Seth's life lasted 912 years; then he died.

⁹ Enosh was 90 years old when he fathered Kenan. ¹⁰ Enosh lived 815 years after he fathered Kenan, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ¹¹ So Enosh's life lasted 905 years; then he died.

¹² Kenan was 70 years old when he fathered Mahalalel. ¹³ Kenan lived 840 years after he fathered Mahalalel, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ So Kenan's life lasted 910 years; then he died.

¹⁵ Mahalalel was 65 years old when he fathered Jared. ¹⁶ Mahalalel lived 830 years after he fathered Jared, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁷ So Mahalalel's life lasted 895 years; then he died.

¹⁸ Jared was 162 years old when he fathered Enoch. ¹⁹ Jared lived 800 years after he fathered Enoch, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁰ So Jared's life lasted 962 years; then he died.

²¹ Enoch was 65 years old when he fathered Methuselah. ²² And after he fathered Methuselah, Enoch walked with God^a 300 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²³ So Enoch's life lasted 365 years. ²⁴ Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him.^b

²⁵ Methuselah was 187 years old when he fathered Lamech. ²⁶ Methuselah lived 782

years after he fathered Lamech, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁷ So Methuselah's life lasted 969 years; then he died.

²⁸ Lamech was 182 years old when he fathered a son. ²⁹ And he named him Noah,^b saying, "This one will bring us relief from the agonizing labor of our hands, caused by the ground the LORD has cursed."^c ³⁰ Lamech lived 595 years after he fathered Noah, and he fathered other sons and daughters. ³¹ So Lamech's life lasted 777 years; then he died.

³² Noah was 500 years old, and he fathered Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Sons of God and Daughters of Mankind

6 When mankind began to multiply on the earth and daughters were born to them, ² the sons of God^d saw that the daughters of mankind were beautiful, and they took any they chose as wives for themselves.^e ³ And the LORD said, "My Spirit will not remain^c with^d mankind forever; ^f because they are corrupt.^g ⁴ Their days will be 120 years."⁴ The Nephilim^f were on the earth both in those days and afterward, when the sons of God came to the daughters of mankind, who bore children to them. They were the powerful men of old, the famous men.

Judgment Decreed

⁵ When the LORD saw that human wickedness was widespread on the earth and that every inclination of the human mind was nothing but evil all the time,^h ⁶ the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth,ⁱ and he was deeply grieved. ⁷ Then the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom

^a5:22 Gn 6:9; 17:1; 24:40; 48:15; Mc 6:8; Mal 2:6; 1Th 2:12
^b5:24 2Kg 2:11; Heb 11:5 ^c5:29 Gn 3:17–19; 4:11 ^d6:2 Jb 1:6; 2:1; 38:7
^e1Pt 3:19–20; Jd 6 ^f6:3 G1 5:16–17; 1Pt 3:20 ^gPs 78:39 ^h6:5 Gn 8:21; Ps 14:1–3; Pr 6:18; Mt 15:19; Rm 1:28–32 ⁱ6:6 Nm 23:19; 1Sm 15:11,29; 2Sm 24:16; Jl 2:13

^a5:2 Hb 'adam ^b5:29 In Hb, the name Noah sounds like "bring us relief." ^c6:3 Or strive ^d6:3 Or in ^e6:3 Lit flesh
^f6:4 Possibly means "fallen ones"; traditionally, "giants"; Nm 13:31–33

'atsab

Hebrew pronunciation	[ah TSAV]
CSB translation	<i>grieve</i>
Uses in Genesis	3
Uses in the OT	15
Focus passage	Genesis 6:6

'**Atsab** is in a word family concerned with emotional and physical pain. The active regular verb means *infuriate* (1Kg 1:6) and *experience pain* (1Ch 4:10); the passive connotes *wounded* (Is 54:6). Reflexive-passive forms indicate *be grieved* (Gn 6:6; 45:5) or *grieve* (Neh 8:10). 'Etsab (6x) is

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painful effort (Gn 3:16; Pr 10:22), *hard work* (Ps 127:2), *hard-earned pay* (Pr 5:10), and *harsh* (Pr 15:1). 'Atstebet (5x) denotes *sorrows* (Ps 16:4), *wounds* (Ps 147:3), *pains* (Jb 9:28), *grief* (Pr 10:10), and *sad* (Pr 15:13). 'Otseb (3x) suggests *offensive* (Ps 139:24). It is *pain* (1Ch 4:9), and the name *Jabez* is derived from it. 'Itstsabon (3x) implies *painful effort* (Gn 3:16), *painful labor* (Gn 3:17), or *agonizing* (Gn 5:29). 'Atseb refers to *oppressed workers* (Is 58:3). Ma'atsebah signifies *place of torment* (Is 50:11). The word family shows that labor involves pain.

I created, off the face of the earth, together with the animals, creatures that crawl, and birds of the sky — for I regret that I made them.”⁸ Noah, however, found favor with the LORD.^a

God Warns Noah

⁹ These are the family records^b of Noah. Noah was a righteous man,^c blameless among his contemporaries;^d Noah walked with God.^e ¹⁰ And Noah fathered three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with wickedness.^a ¹² God saw how corrupt the earth was, for every creature had corrupted its way on the earth.^f ¹³ Then God said to Noah, “I have decided to put an end to every creature, for the earth is filled with wickedness because of them; therefore I am going to destroy them along with the earth.

¹⁴ “Make yourself an ark of gopher^g wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it with pitch inside and outside.¹⁵ This is how you are to make it: The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.^c ¹⁶ You are to make a roof,^d finishing the sides of the ark to within eighteen inches^e of the roof. You are to put a door in the side of the ark. Make it with lower, middle, and upper decks.

¹⁷ “Understand that I am bringing a flood — floodwaters on the earth^g to destroy every creature under heaven with the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you,^h and you will enter the ark with your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives.¹⁹ You are also to bring into the ark two of all the living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you.²⁰ Two of everything — from the birds according to their kinds, from the livestock according to their kinds, and from the animals that crawl on the ground

according to their kinds — will come to you so that you can keep them alive.²¹ Take with you every kind of food that is eaten; gather it as food for you and for them.”²² And Noah did this. He did everything that God had commanded him.ⁱ

Entering the Ark

7 Then the LORD said to Noah, “Enter the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation.^j ² You are to take with you seven pairs, a male and its female, of all the clean animals,^k and two of the animals that are not clean, a male and its female,³ and seven pairs, male and female, of the birds of the sky — in order to keep offspring alive throughout the earth.⁴ Seven days from now I will make it rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing I have made I will wipe off the face of the earth.”⁵ And Noah did everything that the LORD commanded him.^l

⁶ Noah was six hundred years old when the flood came and water covered the earth.⁷ So Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons’ wives entered the ark because of the floodwaters.⁸ From the animals that are clean, and from the animals that are not clean, and from the birds and every creature that crawls on the ground,⁹ two of each, male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, just as God had commanded him.¹⁰ Seven days later the floodwaters came on the earth.

The Flood

¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day

^a 6:8 Gn 19:19; Ex 33:17; Lk 1:30 ^b 6:9 Gn 2:4 ^c Ps 37:39; 2Pt 2:5
^d Gn 17:1; Dt 18:13; Jb 1:1 ^e Gn 5:22 ^f 6:12 Jb 22:15–17; Ps 14:2–3; 53:2–3
^g 6:17 Gn 7:4; 2Pt 2:5 ^h 6:18 Gn 9:9–16; 17:7 ⁱ 6:22 Gn 7:5
^j 7:1 Mt 24:38–39; Lk 17:26–27; Heb 11:7 ^k 7:2 Gn 8:20; Lv 11:1–31; Dt 14:3–20 ^l 7:5 Gn 6:22

^a 6:11 Or *injustice*, also in v. 13 ^b 6:14 Unknown species of tree; perhaps pine or cypress ^c 6:15 Or *300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high* ^d 6:16 Or *window, or hatch*; Hb uncertain ^e 6:16 Lit *to a cubit*

tamiym

Hebrew pronunciation	[tah MEEM]
CSB translation	<i>blameless, mature, perfect</i>
Uses in Genesis	2
Uses in the OT	91
Focus passage	Genesis 6:9

Tamiym, an adjective from *tamam*, “be complete,” has both physical and spiritual significance. Fifty-one occurrences describe animals as *unblemished* (Ex 12:5) or *without blemish*, thus qualified to be sacrificial victims. Related ideas are

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entire (Lv 3:9), *complete* (Lv 23:15), *whole* (Pr 1:12; Ezk 15:5), and *full* (Lv 25:30). A frequent spiritual meaning is *blameless, devout, or upright* (Gn 6:9; 17:1; Jb 12:4). A synonym is *yashar* (“upright”; Pr 2:21). This is God’s standard for human behavior (Dt 18:13) echoed in the NT by the word translated “perfect” (*teleios*) in Mt 5:48. *Tamiym* means *perfect* when describing God’s ways, knowledge, or word (Dt 32:4; 2Sm 22:31; Jb 37:16). He can make our way *perfect* (2Sm 22:33). *Tamiym* can function nominatively as *integrity* or *sincerity* (Jos 24:14; Am 5:10), and adverbially as *honestly* (Jdg 9:16).

of the month, on that day all the sources of the vast watery depths burst open,^a the floodgates of the sky were opened,^b and the rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.¹³ On that same day Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, entered the ark, along with Noah's wife and his three sons' wives.¹⁴ They entered it with all the wildlife according to their kinds, all livestock according to their kinds, all the creatures that crawl on the earth according to their kinds, every flying creature — all the birds and every winged creature — according to their kinds.¹⁵ Two of every creature that has the breath of life in it came to Noah and entered the ark.¹⁶ Those that entered, male and female of every creature, entered just as God had commanded him. Then the LORD shut him in.

¹⁷The flood continued for forty days on the earth; the water increased and lifted up the ark so that it rose above the earth.¹⁸ The water surged and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water.¹⁹ Then the water surged even higher on the earth, and all the high mountains under the whole sky were covered.²⁰ The mountains were covered as the water surged above them more than twenty feet.^a ²¹Every creature perished — those that crawl on the earth, birds, livestock, wildlife, and those that swarm on the earth, as well as all mankind.²² Everything with the breath of the spirit of life in its nostrils^c — everything on dry land died.²³ He wiped out every living thing that was on the face of the earth, from mankind to livestock, to creatures that crawl, to the birds of the sky, and they were wiped off the earth. Only Noah was left, and those that were with him in the ark.^d ²⁴And the water surged on the earth 150 days.

The Flood Recedes

8 God remembered Noah,^e as well as all the wildlife and all the livestock that were with him in the ark. God caused a wind to pass over the earth,^f and the water began to subside.² The sources of the watery depths and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky stopped.^g ³The water steadily receded from the earth, and by the end of 150 days the water had decreased significantly.^h ⁴The ark came to rest in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.ⁱ

⁵The water continued to recede until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were visible.⁶ After forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made,⁷ and he sent out a raven. It went back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth.⁸ Then he sent out a dove to see whether the water on the earth's surface had gone down,⁹ but the dove found no resting place for its foot. It returned to him in the ark because water covered the surface of the whole earth. He reached out and brought it into the ark to himself.¹⁰ So Noah waited seven more days and sent out the dove from the ark again.¹¹ When the dove came to him at evening, there was a plucked olive leaf in its beak. So Noah knew that the water on the earth's surface had gone down.¹² After he had waited another seven days, he sent out the dove, but it did not return to him again.¹³ In the six hundred first year,^b in the first month, on the first day of the month, the water that had covered the earth was dried up. Then Noah removed the ark's cover and saw that the surface of the ground was drying.¹⁴ By the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was dry.

The LORD's Promise

¹⁵ Then God spoke to Noah,¹⁶ "Come out of the ark, you, your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives with you.¹⁷ Bring out all the living creatures that are with you — birds, livestock, those that crawl on the earth — and they will spread over the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth."^j ¹⁸ So Noah, along with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, came out.¹⁹ All the animals, all the creatures that crawl, and all the flying creatures — everything that moves on the earth — came out of the ark by their families.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD. He took some of every kind of clean animal and every kind of clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.²¹ When the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma,^k he said to himself, "I will never again curse the ground^l because of human beings, even though the inclination of the human heart

^a7:11 Gn 8:2; Pr 8:28; Am 9:6 ^b2Kg 7:19; Ps 78:23; Is 24:18; Mal 3:10
^c7:22 Gn 2:7 ^d7:23 1Pt 3:20; 2Pt 2:5 ^e8:1 Gn 19:29; Ex 2:24; 15m 1:19; Ps 105:42 ^fEx 14:21; 15:10; Jb 12:15; Ps 29:10; Is 44:27; Nah 1:4
^g8:2 Gn 7:11 ^h8:3 Gn 7:24 ⁱ8:4 2Kg 19:37; Is 37:38; Jr 51:27
^j8:17 Gn 1:22,28; 9:1 ^k8:21 Ex 29:18; Lv 1:9; Ezk 16:19; 20:41; 2Co 2:15; Eph 5:2; Php 4:18 ^lGn 3:17; 5:29; 6:7; Is 54:9

^a7:20 Lit *surged 15 cubits* ^b8:13 = of Noah's life

is evil from youth onward.^a And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done.^b

²² As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night will not cease."^c

God's Covenant with Noah

9 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.^d The fear and terror of you will be in every living creature on the earth, every bird of the sky, every creature that crawls on the ground, and all the fish of the sea. They are placed under your authority.^e Every creature that lives and moves will be food for you;^e as I gave the green plants, I have given you everything.^f However, you must not eat meat with its lifeblood in it.^g And I will require a penalty for your lifeblood;^h I will require it from any animal^h and from any human; if someone murders a fellow human, I will require that person's life.ⁱ

⁶ Whoever sheds human blood, by humans his blood will be shed,^j for God made humans in his image.^k

⁷ But you, be fruitful and multiply; spread out over the earth and multiply on it."^l

⁸ Then God said to Noah and his sons with him, ⁹ "Understand that I am establishing my covenant^m with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you — birds, livestock, and all wildlife of the earth that are with you — all the animals of the earth that came out of the ark. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you that never again will every creature be wiped out by floodwaters; there will never again be a flood to destroy the earth."ⁿ

¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant^o I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all future generations: ¹³ I have placed my bow in the clouds,^p and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I form clouds over the earth and the bow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant^q between me and you and all the living creatures: water will never again become a flood to destroy every creature. ¹⁶ The bow will be in the clouds, and I will look at it and remember the permanent covenant^r between God

and all the living creatures on earth."¹⁷ God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and every creature on earth."

Prophecies about Noah's Family

¹⁸ Noah's sons who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These three were Noah's sons, and from them the whole earth was populated.^s

²⁰ Noah, as a man of the soil, began by planting^b a vineyard. ²¹ He drank some of the wine, became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. ²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside.^t ²³ Then Shem and Japheth took a cloak and placed it over both their shoulders, and walking backward, they covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned away, and they did not see their father naked.

²⁴ When Noah awoke from his drinking and learned what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵ he said:

Canaan is cursed.^u
He will be the lowest of slaves
to his brothers.^v

²⁶ He also said:
Blessed be the LORD, the God
of Shem;

Let Canaan be^c Shem's slave.

²⁷ Let God extend Japheth;^d
let Japheth dwell in the tents
of Shem;
let Canaan be Shem's slave.

²⁸ Now Noah lived 350 years after the flood. ²⁹ So Noah's life lasted 950 years; then he died.

The Table of Nations

10 These are the family records^w of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. They also had sons after the flood.

² Japheth's sons:^x Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ³ Gomer's

^a8:21 Gn 6:5; Ps 51:5; Jr 17:9; Rm 1:21; 3:23; Eph 2:1–3 ^bGn 9:11,15

^c8:22 Jr 33:20,25 ^d9:1 Gn 1:28; 8:17; 9:7; 35:11 ^e9:3 Dt 12:15;

1Tm 4:3–4 ^f9:1–3 Gn 1:28–30 ^g9:4 Lv 3:17; 7:20; 17:10–16; 19:26;

Dt 12:16,23; 15:23; 1Sm 14:34; Ac 15:20,29 ^h9:5 Ex 21:28 ⁱGn 4:2,8

^j9:6 Ex 21:12–14; Lv 24:17; Nm 35:33; Mt 26:52 ^kGn 1:26–27

^l9:7 Gn 1:28 ^m9:9 Gn 6:18; 8:22; 17:2; Ex 6:4; 19:5; Lv 26:9

ⁿ9:11 Is 54:9–10 ^o9:12 Gn 17:11 ^p9:13 Ezk 1:28; Rv 4:3; 10:1

^q9:15 Lv 26:42,45; Dt 7:9; 1Kg 8:23; Ezk 16:60 ^r9:16 Gn 17:13; 2Sm 23:5;

1Ch 16:17; Is 24:5 ^s9:19 Gn 9:17; 10:32; 1Ch 1:4 ^t9:22 Lm 4:21;

Hab 2:15 ^u9:25 Dt 27:16 ^vJos 9:23; Jdg 1:28; 1Kg 9:20–21

^w10:1 Gn 2:4 ^x10:2–5 1Ch 1:5–7; Ezk 38:1–6

^a9:5 Lit *And your blood belonging to your life I will seek* ^b9:20 Or *Noah began to be a farmer and planted*

^c9:26 As a wish or prayer; others interpret the verbs in vv. 26–27 as prophecy: *Canaan will be . . .* ^d9:27 In Hb, the name *Japheth* sounds like the word "extend."

sons: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.⁴ And Javan's sons: Elishah, Tarshish,^a Kitim, and Dodanim.^a ⁵ From these descendants, the peoples of the coasts and islands spread out into their lands according to their clans in their nations, each with its own language.

⁶ Ham's sons:^b Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. ⁷ Cush's sons: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. And Raamah's sons: Sheba and Dedan.

⁸ Cush fathered Nimrod, who began to be powerful in the land. ⁹ He was a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD. That is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a powerful hunter in the sight of the LORD."¹⁰ His kingdom started with Babylon,^c Erech,^b Accad,^c and Calneh,^d in the land of Shinar.^{e,f} ¹¹ From that land he went to Assyria^e and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah,¹² and Resen, between Nineveh and the great city Calah.

¹³ Mizraim^f fathered the people of Lud, Anam, Lehab, Naphtuh,¹⁴ Pathrus, Casluh (the Philistines came from them), and Caph-tor.^g

¹⁵ Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth,¹⁶ as well as the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites,^h ¹⁷ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites,¹⁸ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the Canaanite clans scattered. ¹⁹ The Canaanite border went from Sidon going toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and going toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim as far as Lasha.

²⁰ These are Ham's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

²¹ And Shem, Japheth's older brother, also had sons. Shem was the father of all the sons of Eber.ⁱ ²² Shem's sons^j were Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram.

²³ Aram's sons: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

²⁴ Arpachshad fathered^g Shelah,^k and Shelah fathered Eber. ²⁵ Eber had two sons. One was named Peleg,^h for during his days the earth was divided;^l his brother was named Joktan. ²⁶ And Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were Joktan's sons. ³⁰ Their settlements

extended from Mesha to Sephar, the eastern hill country.

³¹ These are Shem's sons by their clans, according to their languages, in their lands and their nations.

³² These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their family records, in their nations. The nations on earth spread out from these after the flood.^m

The Tower of Babylon

11 The whole earth had the same language and vocabulary. ² As people migrated from the east,¹ they found a valley in the land of Shinar and settled there.ⁿ ³ They said to each other, "Come, let's make oven-fired bricks." (They used brick for stone and asphalt^o for mortar.) ⁴ And they said, "Come, let's build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky.^p Let's make a name for ourselves; otherwise, we will be scattered throughout the earth."

⁵ Then the LORD came down^q to look over the city and the tower that the humans^j were building. ⁶ The LORD said, "If they have begun to do this as one people all having the same language, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let's go down there and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another's speech."⁸ So from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth,^r and they stopped building the city. ⁹ Therefore it is called Babylon,^{k,l,s} for there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth, and from there the LORD scattered them throughout the earth.

From Shem to Abram

¹⁰ These are the family records^t of Shem. Shem lived 100 years and fathered Arpachshad two years after the flood. ¹¹ After he fathered Arpachshad, Shem lived 500 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ¹² Arpachshad lived 35 years^m and fathered Shelah. ¹³ After he fathered Shelah, Arpachshad lived 403 years and fathered

^a10:4 1Kg 10:22; Is 2:16 ^b10:6–7 1Ch 1:8–10 ^c10:10 Gn 11:9

^dGn 11:2; 14:1 ^e10:11 Mc 5:6 ^f10:13–18 1Ch 1:11–16

^g10:14 Jr 47:4; Am 9:7 ^h10:16 Gn 15:19–21 ⁱ10:21 Gn 11:13–14

^j10:22–29 1Ch 1:17–23 ^k10:24 Gn 11:12; Lk 3:35 ^l10:25 Gn 11:8;

Ps 55:9 ^m10:32 Gn 9:19 ⁿ11:2 Gn 10:10; 14:1; Dn 1:2 ^o11:3 Gn 14:10;

Ex 2:3 ^p11:4 Dt 1:28; 9:1; Ps 107:26 ^q11:5 Gn 18:21; Ex 3:8; 19:11,18,20

^r11:8 Gn 11:4; Ps 92:9; Lk 1:51 ^s11:9 Gn 10:10 ^t11:10 Gn 2:4; 11:27

^A10:4 Some Hb mss, LXX read *Rodanim*; 1Ch 1:7 ^B10:10 Or *Uruk* ^C10:10 Or *Akkad* ^D10:10 Or and all of them

^E10:10 Or in *Babylonia* ^F10:13 = *Egypt* ^G10:24 LXX reads *fathered Cainan, and Cainan fathered*; Gn 11:12–13; Lk 3:35–36

^H10:25 = *Division* ^I11:2 Or *migrated eastward* ^J11:5 Or *the descendants of Adam* ^K11:9 Hb *Babel* ^L11:9 In Hb, the name

for "Babylon," *babel* sounds like the word for "confuse," *balal*. ^M11:12–13 LXX reads *years and fathered Cainan*. ^NAfter he

fathered Cainan, Arpachshad lived 430 years and fathered other sons and daughters, and he died. Cainan lived 130 years

and fathered Shelah. After he fathered Shelah, Cainan lived 330 years and fathered other sons and daughters, and he

died; Gn 10:24; Lk 3:35–36

other sons and daughters. ¹⁴ Shelah lived 30 years and fathered Eber. ¹⁵ After he fathered Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁶ Eber lived 34 years and fathered Peleg. ¹⁷ After he fathered Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ¹⁸ Peleg lived 30 years and fathered Reu. ¹⁹ After he fathered Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁰ Reu lived 32 years and fathered Serug. ²¹ After he fathered Serug, Reu lived 207 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²² Serug lived 30 years and fathered Nahor. ²³ After he fathered Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁴ Nahor lived 29 years and fathered Terah. ^a ²⁵ After he fathered Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and fathered other sons and daughters. ²⁶ Terah lived 70 years and fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

²⁷ These are the family records of Terah. Terah fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and Haran fathered Lot. ²⁸ Haran died in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans, during his father Terah's lifetime. ²⁹ Abram and Nahor took wives: Abram's wife was named Sarai,^b and Nahor's wife was named Milcah.^c She was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milcah and Iscah. ³⁰ Sarai was unable to conceive;^d she did not have a child.

³¹ Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot (Haran's son), and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they set out together from Ur of the Chaldeans^e to go to the land of Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there. ³² Terah lived 205 years and died in Haran.

The Call of Abram

12 The LORD said to Abram:
Go from your land,
your relatives,
and your father's house
to the land that I will show you.^f
² I will make you into a great nation,^g
I will bless you,^h
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.ⁱ
³ I will bless those who bless you,
I will curse anyone who treats you
with contempt,^j
and all the peoples on earth
will be blessed^A through you.^{B,k}

⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was

seventy-five years old when he left Haran.^l ⁵ He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated, and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the site of Shechem,^m at the oak of Moreh. (At that time the Canaanites were in the land.) ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspringⁿ I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built an altar to the LORD there, and he called on the name of the LORD.^o ⁹ Then Abram journeyed by stages to the Negev.

Abram in Egypt

¹⁰ There was a famine in the land,^p so Abram went down to Egypt to stay there for a while because the famine in the land was severe.

¹¹ When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife, Sarai, "Look, I know what a beautiful woman you are. ¹² When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' They will kill me but let you live.^q ¹³ Please say you're my sister so it will go well for me because of you, and my life will be spared on your account." ¹⁴ When Abram entered Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh, so the woman was taken to Pharaoh's household. ¹⁶ He treated Abram well because of her, and Abram acquired flocks and herds, male and female donkeys, male and female slaves, and camels.

¹⁷ But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram's wife, Sarai.^r ¹⁸ So Pharaoh sent for Abram and said, "What have you done to me? Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She's my sister,' so that I took her as my wife? Now, here is your wife. Take her and go!" ²⁰ Then Pharaoh gave his men orders about him, and they sent him away with his wife and all he had.

^a11:24 Jos 24:2 ^b11:29 Gn 17:15; 20:12 ^cGn 22:20,23; 24:15
^d11:30 Gn 25:21; 29:31; Ex 23:26; Jdg 13:2–3; 15m 2:5; Jb 24:21; Is 54:1;
Lk 1:36; 23:29; Gl 4:27; Heb 11:11 ^e11:31 Gn 15:7; Neh 9:7; Ac 7:4
^f12:1 Gn 15:7; Ac 7:3; Heb 11:8 ^g12:2 Gn 17:4–6; 18:18; 46:3; Dt 26:5
^hGn 22:17 ⁱZch 8:13 ^j12:3 Gn 27:29; Nm 24:9 ^kGn 18:18; 26:4; 28:14;
Ac 3:25; Gl 3:8 ^l12:4 Gn 11:27,31 ^m12:6 Gn 35:4; Dt 11:30; Heb 11:9
ⁿ12:7 Gn 13:15; Ex 33:1; Ps 105:9–12; Ac 7:5; Gl 3:16 ^o12:8 Gn 4:26; 21:33
^p12:10 Gn 26:1; 43:1 ^q12:12 Gn 20:1–18; 26:6–11 ^r12:17 Gn 20:18;
1Ch 16:21; Ps 105:14

^A12:3 Or will find blessing ^B12:3 Or will bless themselves by you ^C12:7 Lit seed

Abram and Lot Separate

13 Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev^a — he, his wife, and all he had, and Lot with him.² Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.³ He went by stages from the Negev to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had formerly been,⁴ to the site where he had built the altar. And Abram called on the name of the LORD there.^b

⁵ Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, also had flocks, herds, and tents.⁶ But the land was unable to support them as long as they stayed together, for they had so many possessions that they could not stay together,^{c7} and there was quarreling between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock.^d (At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites were living in the land.)^e

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Please, let's not have quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, since we are relatives.⁹ Isn't the whole land before you? Separate from me: if you go to the left, I will go to the right; if you go to the right, I will go to the left."

¹⁰ Lot looked out and saw that the entire plain^a of the Jordan^f as far as Zoar^g was well watered everywhere like the LORD's garden^h and the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)ⁱ¹¹ So Lot chose the entire plain of the Jordan for himself. Then Lot journeyed eastward, and they separated from each other.¹² Abram lived in the land of Canaan, but Lot lived in the cities on the plain and set up his tent near Sodom.¹³ (Now the men of Sodom were evil, sinning immensely^b against the LORD.)^j

¹⁴ After Lot had separated from him, the LORD said to Abram, "Look from the place where you are. Look north and south, east and west,^{k15} for I will give you and your offspring^c forever all the land that you see.¹⁶ I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth,^m so that if anyone could count the dust of the earth, then your offspring could be counted.¹⁷ Get up and walk around the land, through its length and width, for I will give it to you."

¹⁸ So Abram moved his tent and went to live near the oaks of Mamre at Hebron,ⁿ where he built an altar to the LORD.

Abram Rescues Lot

14 In those days King Amraphel of Shinar,^o King Arioch of Ellasar, King Chedorlaomer of Elam,^p and King Tidal of

Goiim^d waged war against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinar of Admah, and King Shemeber of Zeboiim,^q as well as the king of Bela (that is, Zoar').³ All of these came as allies to the Siddim Valley (that is, the Dead Sea').⁴ They were subject to Chedorlaomer for twelve years, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim^r in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham,^s the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim,⁶ and the Horites^v in the mountains of Seir, as far as El-paran^w by the wilderness.⁷ Then they came back to invade En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh'), and they defeated the whole territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who lived in Hazazon-tamar.^y

⁸ Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) went out and lined up for battle in the Siddim Valley⁹ against King Chedorlaomer of Elam, King Tidal of Goiim, King Amraphel of Shinar, and King Arioch of Ellasar — four kings against five.¹⁰ Now the Siddim Valley contained many asphalt pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them,^e but the rest fled to the mountains.^{z11} The four kings took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food and went on.¹² They also took Abram's nephew Lot and his possessions, for he was living in Sodom,^{aa} and they went on.

¹³ One of the survivors came and told Abram the Hebrew^{ab} who lived near the oaks belonging to Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshcol and the brother of Aner. They were bound by a treaty with Abram.¹⁴ When Abram heard that his relative had been taken prisoner, he assembled^f his 318 trained men, born in his household,^{ac} and they went in pursuit as far as Dan.^{ad15} And he and his servants deployed against them by night, defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah to the north of Damascus.¹⁶ He brought back all the goods and also his relative Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the other people.

^a13:1 Gn 12:9 ^b13:4 Gn 12:7,8 ^c13:6 Gn 36:7 ^d13:7 Gn 26:20
^eGn 12:6; 15:20–21 ^f13:10 Gn 19:17–29 ^gGn 14:2,8; Dt 34:3
^hGn 2:8–10 ⁱGn 19:24–25 ^j13:13 Gn 18:20; Ezk 16:49; 2Pt 2:7–8
^k13:14 Gn 28:14 ^l13:15 Gn 12:7; 15:18; 17:8; 24:7; 26:4; 28:13; 35:12;
Dt 34:4; 2Ch 20:7; Ac 7:5 ^m13:16 Gn 16:10; 28:14; Nm 23:10
ⁿ13:18 Gn 14:13; 18:1; 23:17–19 ^o14:1 Gn 10:10; 11:2 ^pGn 10:22; Is 11:11;
Dn 8:2 ^q14:2 Hs 11:8 ^rGn 19:22–23 ^s14:3 Nm 34:12; Dt 3:17; Jos 3:16
^t14:5 Gn 15:20; Dt 2:12,20–21; 3:11,13; Jos 12:4 ^uDt 1:4; Jos 9:10
^v14:6 Gn 36:20; Dt 2:12,22 ^wGn 21:21; Nm 10:12 ^x14:7 Nm 13:26
^y2Ch 20:2 ^z14:10 Gn 19:17 ^{aa}14:12 Gn 13:12 ^{ab}14:13 Gn 39:14; 40:15
^{ac}14:14 Gn 12:5; 15:3; 17:27; Ec 2:7 ^{ad}Dt 34:1; Jdg 18:29; 1Kg 15:20

^a13:10 Lit *circle*; i.e., probably the large round plain where the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea, also in v. 11 ^b13:13 Lit *evil and sinful* ^c13:15 Lit *seed* ^d14:1 Or *nations* ^e14:10 Sam, LXX; MT reads *fell there* ^f14:14 Sam; MT reads *poured out*

Melchizedek's Blessing

¹⁷ After Abram returned from defeating Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him in the Shaveh Valley (that is, the King's Valley^a). ¹⁸ Melchizedek, king of Salem,^{a,b} brought out bread and wine; he was a priest to God Most High. ¹⁹ He blessed him and said:

Abram is blessed by God Most High,
Creator^b of heaven and earth,
²⁰ and blessed be God Most High
who has handed over your enemies
to you.

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.^d

²¹ Then the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the people, but take the possessions for yourself."

²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand in an oath to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take a thread or sandal strap or anything that belongs to you, so you can never say, 'I made Abram rich.' ²⁴ I will take nothing except what the servants have eaten. But as for the share of the men who came with me — Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre — they can take their share."

The Abrahamic Covenant

15 After these events, the word of the LORD came^e to Abram in a vision:
Do not be afraid,^f Abram.
I am your shield;^g
your reward will be very great.

² But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what can you give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"^c

³ Abram continued, "Look, you have given me no offspring, so a slave born in^o my house will be my heir."

⁴ Now the word of the LORD came to him: "This one will not be your heir; instead, one who comes from your own body^e will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous."^h

⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.ⁱ

⁷ He also said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."^j

⁸ But he said, "Lord GOD, how can I know^k that I will possess it?"

"Your King already faced danger and willingly laid down his life to rescue you from your fears, both legitimate and otherwise."



⁹ He said to him, "Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."

¹⁰ So he brought all these to him, cut them in half, and laid the pieces opposite each other, but he did not cut the birds^l in half.

¹¹ Birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. ¹² As the sun was setting, a deep sleep^m came over Abram, and suddenly great terror and darkness descended on him.

¹³ Then the LORD said to Abram, ⁿ "Know this for certain: Your offspring will be resident aliens^o for four hundred years^p in a land that does not belong to them and will be enslaved and oppressed. ^f ¹⁴ However, I will judge the nation they serve,^q and afterward they will go out with many possessions. ¹⁵ But you will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ⁵ ¹⁶ In the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."^{g,t}

¹⁷ When the sun had set and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the divided animals. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "I give this land to your offspring,^u from the Brook of Egypt^v to the great river, the Euphrates River: ¹⁹ the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰ Hethites, Perizzites, Rephaim, ²¹ Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

Hagar and Ishmael

16 Abram's wife, Sarai, had not borne any children for him, but she owned an Egyptian slave named Hagar. ² Sarai said to Abram, "Since the LORD has prevented me from bearing children, go to my slave; perhaps through her I can build a family." And Abram agreed to what Sarai

^a14:17 2Sm 18:18 ^b14:18 Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6; 7:1 ^cPs 57:2

^d14:20 Heb 7:4 ^e15:1 1Sm 15:10; 2Sm 7:4; 1Kg 6:11; Is 38:4; Jr 1:2

^fGn 26:24; Is 41:10; Jr 30:10; Lk 1:13,30 ^gDt 33:29; 2Sm 22:3,31; Ps 3:3;

7:10 ^h15:5 Gn 22:17; 26:4; Ex 32:13; Dt 1:10; 10:22; 1Ch 27:23; Rm 4:18;

Heb 11:12 ⁱ15:6 Rm 4:3,9,22; Gl 3:6; Jms 2:23 ^j15:7 Gn 11:31; 12:1;

Neh 9:7–8; Ac 7:2–4 ^k15:8 Jdg 6:17; 2Kg 20:8; Ps 86:17; Is 7:11–13;

Lk 1:18 ^l15:10 Lv 1:17 ^m15:12 Gn 2:21 ⁿ15:13–14 Ac 7:6–7

^o15:13 Ex 22:21; 23:9 ^pEx 12:40; Gl 3:17 ^q15:14 Ex 6:6; 7:4; 12:12

^rEx 3:22 ^s15:15 Gn 25:8; 47:30 ^t15:16 Lv 18:24–28; Dn 8:23;

Mt 23:32; 1Th 2:16 ^u15:18 Gn 12:7; 13:15; 17:8; 24:7; 26:4; Nm 34:2;

Dt 34:4; Jos 21:43; Neh 9:8; Ac 7:5 ^vEx 23:31; Nm 34:1–15;

Dt 1:7–8; 2Kg 24:7

^a14:18 = Jerusalem ^b14:19 Or Possessor ^c15:2 Hb obscure ^d15:3 Lit a son of ^e15:4 Lit loins ^f15:13 Lit will serve them and they will oppress them ^g15:16 Lit Amorites is not yet complete



Moving from Fear to Faith

William P. Smith

Everyone wrestles with fear. Individual fears arise from your unique personality and life experiences. Other fears, such as death, are more universal. Such fears touch us all in some way as part of the human experience of living in a broken world.

Fear is healthy when it leads to the avoidance of unnecessary danger. Knowledge of such dangers, then, can result in healthy fear. But rampant fear can absorb too much of your attention and can end up controlling your life. God never intended you to be imprisoned by fear, and faith in his love can free you from it.

Sadly, many of us have tried to deal with our fears in ways that have not worked and have even worsened it.

A Few Inadequate Ways to Handle Fear

One popular way of dealing with fear is to hide behind a barrier. We hire security agencies; we police our borders; we buy software filters, etc. Unfortunately, barriers are never 100 percent effective. In a frightening world with wicked people in it, merely trying to insulate yourself from danger is never sufficient.

Another approach is to prepare for as many eventualities as possible, perhaps by stockpiling food, water, fuel, camping gear, batteries, weapons, etc. But after Y2K, there was still 9/11. Unfortunately, preparedness has no objective limit. How much is enough? Can it be too much? When does prudence become paranoid?

A third approach is to rely on information for rescue, depending on Google, YouTube, or your brilliant friend. But again, is information always enough? The stock market could plunge dramatically in a few short hours and virtually wipe out your retirement account, even though you just checked it that morning. If your solution to danger is to be informed, you will spend every waking moment wondering if you have enough information.

Even worse than being ineffective, these strategies gradually weaken your relationship with God. Where does he fit in a world where you think you can protect yourself by being diligent or careful? You won't seek him for wisdom—you already have information. You won't pray for his provision—you have cases of canned food and bottled water. You won't seek his mercy—you'll watch The Weather Channel.

Only when other devices fail will you turn to him. But trust depends on relationship, and you were too busy protecting yourself to build one with him. You will become a functional and practical atheist, trusting more in your 401(k) than in the God who promises daily bread.

Real Faith Affects Your Strategies

You must relearn that no human strategy is effective unless God is your refuge. He regularly begins biblical conversations with words like "Don't fear/be afraid" (Gn 15:1; 2Kg 19:6; Is 35:3-4; Hg 2:5; Rv 1:17) or "Be strong and courageous" (Dt 31:6-7; Jos 1:6-7; 1Ch 28:20; Ps 27:14; 1Co 16:13; 2Tm 2:1). He says those things to encourage and embolden people who are weakened by their fears. Not only does he recognize that frightened people need special care (1Th 5:14; 1Pt 3:14), he makes sure he's first in line to give it to them.

There's a special place in his heart for you when you're scared. He doesn't threaten or intimidate (1Kg 19:11-13). He moves toward you, longing to lessen your fear (1Jn 4:16-18). And he invites you to move toward him for the same purpose. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are protected" (Pr 18:10).

When you find your greatest safety in your relationship with the Lord, you are free to live without being controlled by fear. Sometimes that means you will flee danger with a clear mind (Lk 4:28–30; Ac 9:23–25; 12:5–11). At other times you may surprise yourself by moving *toward* danger because you're convinced that is where God wants you. Other people might think you're foolish, but you'll know there is no safer place on earth than where God's call takes you.

Does Paul's decision in Acts 21:10–13 to trust God make sense to you? If your goal in life is to live as safely as possible, then it won't. It won't seem reasonable to put yourself in danger for the sake of what God is doing on earth. Instead, you will shrink his kingdom down to the size that your fears find comfortable. Paul understood that although dangers and threats in this life are real, the ultimate triumph of Christ's kingdom is even more real. As Jesus said earlier, "I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33). Jesus knew you can have both peace and courage while facing real threats.

When Jesus knew it was the time set for him by his Father, he marched resolutely to Jerusalem, knowing what was waiting for him there. In so doing he embodied 1Pt 4:19: "So then, let those who suffer according to God's will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator while doing what is good."

Thank God Jesus kept his focus on the Father and on others. Because Jesus did not live by fear, we get a glimpse of what God is like through his life. More than that, through his death Jesus set us free from what *should* terrify each of us: sin, death, and being kept apart from God forever. Because he paid the price for our sin, he removed the only thing that could separate us from God and his power in our lives to overcome our fears.

Now you are free to embrace the same life calling that captured Jesus—to love God and his image bearers with reckless abandon. It's a wonderful calling, yet it shrivels up when you live in fear. Thankfully, like the fearful disciples, you also can take heart and be encouraged. Your King already faced danger and willingly laid down his life to rescue you from your fears, both legitimate and otherwise.

Remind Yourself that God Runs His World

The ultimate antidote to fear is realizing that God rules the world. You will need to work extra hard to remember that reality because you live in a world that works overtime to draw your attention to its many dangers.

First, list all the Bible passages you can remember or find that focus on God's good involvement in this world in general and in your life specifically. Remind yourself that your life will not end one day too early because every day of it was already ordained "before a single one of them began" (Ps 139:16). Remind yourself that the one who keeps an active census of your hair follicles is deeply involved in the more important areas of your life (Lk 12:7).

Second, songs like "This Is My Father's World" are a great way to restore balance to our lives when fear seems overwhelming. Others may speak to you about God's extra kindness and goodness when you face dangers, such as "It Is Well" or "Blessed Be Your Name." Sing them to yourself, and let their truths renew your shaken confidence.

Third, Christian creeds and catechisms can provide short, power-packed reminders of God's sovereignty for your quick review when faced with danger. For instance, the answer to the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism, "What is your only comfort in life and in death?" is given, "That I am not my own but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. . . . He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him."

The apostle Paul and his friends faced something in Asia that was so overwhelming they were convinced they were going to die. Paul's response was, This happened "so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises

the dead" (2Co 1:8–9). Those scary events took place for a reason. He doesn't say he trusted God to keep them from dying. Instead, he grew even more confident in a God who brings people back to life *after* they've died.

Think Clearly and Move Outward

Here are a few questions to help you sort out your fears and point you to your next step.

1. In this scary situation that you're facing, what are you afraid might happen?
2. If it actually did happen, what might you lose that you value—health? possessions? relationships? a feeling of security? reputation? peacefulness? time? success?
3. The things in question 2 are all good and important, but ask yourself "Is it possible that this thing has become too important to me?"

If you value something more than you value God and his presence, you will feel frightened any time it's threatened. Jesus says that treasuring anything or anyone above him makes you unworthy of him (Mt 10:37–39). It also keeps you locked in a world of fear.

*Adapted from "Living in a Dangerous World: Moving from Fear to Faith" by William P. Smith (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2011).

said.^a ³ So Abram's wife, Sarai, took Hagar, her Egyptian slave, and gave her to her husband, Abram, as a wife for him. This happened after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan ten years. ⁴ He slept with^A Hagar, and she became pregnant. When she saw that she was pregnant, her mistress became contemptible to her. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for my suffering!^B I put my slave in your arms,^C and when she saw that she was pregnant, I became contemptible to her. May the LORD judge between me and you."^b

⁶ Abram replied to Sarai, "Here, your slave is in your power; do whatever you want with her." Then Sarai mistreated her so much that she ran away from her.

⁷ The angel of the LORD^C found her by a spring in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ He said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?"

She replied, "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai."

⁹ The angel of the LORD said to her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her authority."¹⁰ The angel of the LORD said to her, "I will greatly multiply your offspring,^d and they will be too many to count."

¹¹ The angel of the LORD said to her, "You have conceived and will have a son. You will

name him Ishmael,^D for the LORD has heard your cry of affliction.¹² This man will be like a wild donkey. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him; he will settle near all his relatives."^e

¹³ So she named the LORD who spoke to her: "You are El-roi,"^E for she said, "In this place, have I actually seen^f the one who sees me?"^f ¹⁴ That is why the well is called Beer-lahai-roi.^G It is between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ So Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son (whom Hagar bore) Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

Covenant Circumcision

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him, saying, "I am God Almighty.^g Live^h in my presence and be blameless.^h ² I will set up my covenant between me and you, and I will multiply you greatly."

³ Then Abram fell facedown and God spoke with him: ⁴ "As for me, here is my covenant with you: You will become the father of many nations. ⁵ Your name will no longer be Abram; your name will be Abraham,^j for I will make

^a16:2 Gn 3:17 ^b16:5 Gn 31:49; Jos 22:25; 1Sm 24:12 ^c16:7 Gn 22:11; Ex 3:2; Nm 22:22; Jdg 2:1; 2Sm 24:16; 1Kg 19:7; 2Kg 19:35; Ps 34:7

^d16:10 Gn 15:5; 17:2; 26:24; Lv 26:9; Dt 7:13; 30:5; Ps 107:38

^e16:12 Gn 25:18 ^f16:13 Gn 32:30; Ex 33:23; Ps 139:1–12 ^g17:1 Gn 28:3; 35:11; Ex 6:3 ^hGn 6:9; Ps 15:2; Lk 1:6

^A16:4 Lit *He came to* ^B16:5 Or "May my suffering be on you!" ^C16:13 Hb obscure ^d16:14 = Well of the Living One Who Sees Me a Multitude

^D16:5 Lit *bosom* ^D16:11 = God Hears ^E16:13 = God Sees Me ^f17:1 Or *Walk* ^g17:5 = The Father Is Exalted ^j17:5 = Father of

you the father of many nations.^a I will make you extremely fruitful and will make nations and kings come from you.⁷ I will confirm my covenant that is between me and you and your future offspring throughout their generations. It is a permanent covenant^b to be your God and the God of your offspring after you.⁸ And to you and your future offspring^{A,d} I will give the land where you are residing — all the land of Canaan — as a permanent possession,^e and I will be their God.”

⁹ God also said to Abraham, “As for you, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations are to keep my covenant.¹⁰ This is my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you, which you are to keep: Every one of your males must be circumcised.¹¹ You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskin to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and you.^{B,f} ¹² Throughout your generations, every male among you is to be circumcised^g at eight days old — every male born in your household or purchased from any foreigner and not your offspring.¹³ Whether born in your household or purchased, he must be circumcised. My covenant will be marked in your flesh as a permanent covenant.¹⁴ If any male is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that man will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

¹⁵ God said to Abraham, “As for your wife Sarai, do not call her Sarai, for Sarah^c will be her name.¹⁶ I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son by her.^h I will bless her, and she will produce nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

¹⁷ Abraham fell facedown. Then he laughedⁱ and said to himself, “Can a child be born to a hundred-year-old man? Can Sarah, a ninety-year-old woman, give birth?”¹⁸ So Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael were acceptable^o to you!”

¹⁹ But God said, “No. Your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will name him Isaac.^e I will confirm my covenant with him as a permanent covenant for his future offspring.²⁰ As for Ishmael, I have heard you. I will certainly bless him; I will make him fruitful and will multiply him greatly. He will father twelve tribal leaders,^j and I will make him into a great nation.²¹ But I will confirm my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this time next year.”^k ²² When he finished talking with him, God withdrew^f from Abraham.^l

²³ So Abraham took his son Ishmael and those born in his household or purchased — every male among the members of Abraham’s household — and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on that very day, just as God had said to him.²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when the flesh of his foreskin was circumcised,²⁵ and his son Ishmael was thirteen years old when the flesh of his foreskin was circumcised.²⁶ On that very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised.²⁷ And all the men of his household — whether born in his household or purchased from a foreigner — were circumcised with him.

Abraham’s Three Visitors

18 The LORD appeared to Abraham at the oaks of Mamre^m while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent during the heat of the day.² He looked up, and he saw three men standing near him.ⁿ When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them, bowed to the ground,³ and said, “My lord, if I have found favor with you, please do not go on past your servant.⁴ Let a little water be brought, that you may wash your feet and rest yourselves under the tree.⁵ I will bring a bit of bread so that you may strengthen yourselves. This is why you have passed your servant’s way. Later, you can continue on.”

“Yes,” they replied, “do as you have said.”

⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent and said to Sarah, “Quick! Knead three measures^c of fine flour and make bread.”^h ⁷ Abraham ran to the herd and got a tender, choice calf. He gave it to a young man, who hurried to prepare it.⁸ Then Abraham took curds^l and milk, as well as the calf that he had prepared, and set them before the men. He served^l them as they ate under the tree.

Sarah Laughs

⁹ “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he answered.

¹⁰ The LORD said, “I will certainly come back to you in about a year’s time, and your wife Sarah will have a son!”^o Now Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent behind him.

^a17:5 Gn 35:11; 48:19; Rm 4:11–12,16–18 ^b17:7 Gn 9:16 ^cEx 6:7; Lv 11:45; 26:12,45; Dt 29:13; Heb 11:16; Rv 21:7 ^d17:8 Gl 3:16 ^eGn 48:4; Ac 7:5 ^f17:11 Ex 12:48; Dt 10:16; Ac 7:8; Rm 4:11 ^g17:12 Lv 12:3; Lk 1:59; 2:21; Php 3:5 ^h17:16 Gn 18:10 ⁱ17:17 Gn 21:6–7; Rm 4:19 ^j17:20 Gn 25:13–16 ^k17:21 Gn 18:10,14; 21:1 ^l17:22 Gn 35:13 ^m18:1 Gn 13:18; 14:13; 23:17–19 ⁿ18:2 Gn 18:16,22; 19:1; 32:24; Jos 5:13; Jdg 13:6–11; Heb 13:2 ^o18:10 Gn 17:10; 21:1; Rm 9:9

^A17:8 Lit seed ^B17:11 You in v. 11 is pl. ^C17:15 = Princess ^D17:18 Lit alive ^E17:19 = He Laughs ^F17:22 Lit went up, or ascended ^G18:6 Lit three seahs; about 21 quarts ^H18:6 A round, thin, unleavened bread ^I18:8 Or butter ^J18:8 Lit was standing by

¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were old and getting on in years.^a Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.^a ¹² So she laughed to herself: “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I have delight?”^b

¹³ But the LORD asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Can I really have a baby when I’m old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything impossible for the LORD?^c At the appointed time I will come back to you, and in about a year she will have a son.”

¹⁵ Sarah denied it. “I did not laugh,” she said, because she was afraid.

But he replied, “No, you did laugh.”

Abraham’s Plea for Sodom

¹⁶ The men got up from there and looked out over Sodom, and Abraham was walking with them to see them off. ¹⁷ Then the LORD said, “Should I hide what I am about to do from Abraham?^d ¹⁸ Abraham is to become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him.^e ¹⁹ For I have chosen⁸ him so that he will command his children and his house after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just. This is how the LORD will fulfill to Abraham what he promised him.” ²⁰ Then the LORD said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is immense, and their sin is extremely serious. ²¹ I will go down^f to see if what they have done justifies the cry that has come up to me. If not, I will find out.”

²² The men turned from there and went toward Sodom⁹ while Abraham remained standing before the LORD. ^c ²³ Abraham stepped forward and said, “Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked?^h ²⁴ What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away instead of sparing the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people who are in it? ²⁵ You could not possibly do such a thing: to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. You could not possibly do that! Won’t the Judge of the whole earth do what is just?”ⁱ

²⁶ The LORD said, “If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.”^j

²⁷ Then Abraham answered, “Since I have ventured to speak to my lord — even though I am dust and ashes — ²⁸ suppose the fifty righteous lack five. Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?”

He replied, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.”

²⁹ Then he spoke to him again, “Suppose forty are found there?”

He answered, “I will not do it on account of forty.”

³⁰ Then he said, “Let my lord not be angry, and I will speak further. Suppose thirty are found there?”

He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

³¹ Then he said, “Since I have ventured to speak to my lord, suppose twenty are found there?”

He replied, “I will not destroy it on account of twenty.”

³² Then he said, “Let my lord not be angry, and I will speak one more time.^k Suppose ten are found there?”

He answered, “I will not destroy it on account of ten.” ³³ When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

19 The two angels entered Sodom¹ in the evening as Lot was sitting in Sodom’s gateway. When Lot saw them, he got up to meet them. He bowed with his face to the ground² and said, “My lords, turn aside to your servant’s house, wash your feet, and spend the night. Then you can get up early and go on your way.”

“No,” they said. “We would rather spend the night in the square.” ³ But he urged them so strongly that they followed him and went into his house. He prepared a feast and baked unleavened bread for them, and they ate.

⁴ Before they went to bed, the men of the city of Sodom, both young and old, the whole population, surrounded the house.

⁵ They called out to Lot and said, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Send them out to us so we can have sex with them!”^m

⁶ Lot went out to them at the entrance and shut the door behind him. ⁷ He said, “Don’t do this evil, my brothers. ⁸ Look, I’ve got two daughters who haven’t been intimate with a man.ⁿ I’ll bring them out to you, and you

^a18:11 Gn 17:17; Rm 4:19; Heb 11:11–12 ^b18:12 Gn 17:17; Lk 1:18; 1Pt 3:6
^c18:14 Jb 34:10; Jr 32:17,27; Mt 19:26; Mk 10:27; Lk 1:37; 18:27; Heb 6:18
^d18:17 Am 3:7 ^e18:18 Gn 12:3; 26:4; Gl 3:8 ^f18:21 Gn 11:5; Ex 3:8; Ps 14:2 ^g18:22 Gn 19:1 ^h18:23 Ex 23:7; Nm 16:22; 2Sm 24:17; Ps 11:4–7
ⁱ18:25 Dt 1:16–17; 32:4; Jb 8:3,20; Ps 58:11; 94:2; Is 3:10–11; Rm 3:5–6
^j18:26 Jr 5:1 ^k18:32 Jdg 6:39 ^l19:1 Gn 18:2,22 ^m19:5 Lv 18:22; Jdg 19:22 ⁿ19:8 Jdg 19:24

^a18:11 Lit days ^b18:19 Lit known ^c18:22 Alt Hb tradition reads *while the LORD remained standing before Abraham*

can do whatever you want^a to them. However, don't do anything to these men, because they have come under the protection of my roof."

⁹ "Get out of the way!" they said, adding, "This one came here as an alien, but he's acting like a judge!^b Now we'll do more harm to you than to them." They put pressure on Lot and came up to break down the door. ¹⁰ But the angels^b reached out, brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹ They struck the men who were at the entrance of the house, both young and old, with blindness^c so that they were unable to find the entrance.^b

¹² Then the angels said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here: a son-in-law, your sons and daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of this place, ¹³ for we are about to destroy this place because the outcry against its people is so great before the LORD, that the LORD has sent us to destroy it."^c

¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were going to marry his daughters. "Get up," he said. "Get out of this place, for the LORD is about to destroy the city!"^d But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

¹⁵ At daybreak the angels urged Lot on: "Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment^e of the city." ¹⁶ But he hesitated. Because of the LORD's compassion for him, the men grabbed his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters. They brought him out and left him outside the city.

¹⁷ As soon as the angels got them outside, one of them^f said, "Run for your lives! Don't look back and don't stop anywhere on the plain! Run to the mountains, or you will be swept away!"

¹⁸ But Lot said to them, "No, my lords^f — please. ¹⁹ Your servant has indeed found favor with you, and you have shown me great kindness by saving my life. But I can't run to the mountains; the disaster will overtake me, and I will die. ²⁰ Look, this town is close enough for me to flee to. It is a small place. Please let me run to it — it's only a small place, isn't it? — so that I can survive."

²¹ And he said to him, "All right, ^g I'll grant your request^h about this matter too and will not demolish the town you mentioned.

"This is not a debate about some abstract, theological principle; this is about people."



²² Hurry up! Run to it, for I cannot do anything until you get there." Therefore the name of the city is Zoar.ⁱ

²³ The sun had risen over the land when Lot reached Zoar. ²⁴ Then out of the sky the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah burning sulfur from the LORD.^f ²⁵ He demolished these cities, the entire plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and whatever grew on the ground. ²⁶ But Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt.^g

²⁷ Early in the morning Abraham went to the place where he had stood before the LORD.^h ²⁸ He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of the plain, and he saw that smoke was going up from the land like the smoke of a furnace. ²⁹ So it was, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham and brought Lot out of the middle of the upheaval when he demolished the cities where Lot had lived.

The Origin of Moab and Ammon

³⁰ Lot departed from Zoar and lived in the mountains along with his two daughters, because he was afraid to live in Zoar. Instead, he and his two daughters lived in a cave. ³¹ Then the firstborn said to the younger, "Our father is old, and there is no man in the land to sleep with us as is the custom of all the land. ³² Come, let's get our father to drink wine so that we can sleep with him and preserve our father's line." ³³ So they got their father to drink wine that night, and the firstborn came and slept with her father; he did not know when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁴ The next day the firstborn said to the younger, "Look, I slept with my father last night. Let's get him to drink wine again tonight so you can go sleep with him and we can preserve our father's line." ³⁵ That night they again got their father to drink wine, and the younger went and slept with him; he did not know when she lay down or when she got up.

^a19:9 Ex 2:14 ^b19:11 Dt 28:28–29; 2Kg 6:18; Ac 13:11 ^c19:13 Gn 18:20–21; Ex 3:7; 22:23; 1Sm 9:16; Jb 27:9 ^d19:14 Nm 16:21,26,45; Jr 51:6; Rv 18:4 ^e19:22 Gn 14:2 ^f19:24 Dt 29:23; Ps 11:6; Is 13:19; Jr 20:16; Ezk 16:49–50; Lk 17:28–29; 2Pt 2:6–8; Jd 7 ^g19:26 Lk 17:32 ^h19:27 Gn 18:22

^a19:8 Lit *do what is good in your eyes* ^b19:10 Lit *men*, also in v. 12 ^c19:11 Or *a blinding light* ^d19:15 Or *iniquity, or guilt* ^e19:17 LXX, Syr, Vg read *outside, they* ^f19:18 Or *my Lord, or my lord* ^g19:21 Or *Look!* ^h19:21 Lit *I will lift up your face* ⁱ19:22 In Hb, the name *Zoar* is related to "small" in v. 20; its previous name was "Bela"; Gn 14:2.



Homosexuality and the Bible Outdated Advice or Words of Life?

R. Nicholas Black

The world is changing. The speed with which change now occurs is faster than ever. And nothing is changing more rapidly than the way we understand sexuality and relationships. Homosexuality and its increasing acceptance, not just by society at large but also by people within the Christian church, is challenging the way Christians have historically and doctrinally understood sex and its role in defining relationships. And this is not a mere intellectual debate; it is a battle that is beginning to tear apart even conservative and evangelical churches, denominations, families, and friendships. It is a battle with wide-ranging societal and faith implications.

It is a confusing time. Many Christian people and denominations are reinterpreting the church's long-held stance on Scripture passages—that is, the orthodox position. Some denominations are accepting gay and lesbian relationships as being fully sanctioned by God. And society at large is increasingly pressuring, if not silencing, any voice that does not affirm gay relationships.

Churches that hold to the orthodox position seem increasingly silent on the subject—not wanting the world to interpret their position on the subject as being the church's main message. While it's true that the gospel is about more than sexual ethics, the silence of the evangelical church (particularly at the local level) is contributing to the confusion about the role of Scripture to direct Christians in understanding and living out their lives and their sexuality in accordance with God's design.

People on both sides bring to the table passionate arguments and perspectives, with each side claiming they are being faithful to the biblical text. For those who desire to follow Jesus, it matters whether one obeys his will in this area. While spirituality today is considered to be whatever enriches or affirms one's life, for the Christian, the test of real faith has always been, and continues to be, obeying what God says. What is the truth of this important matter?

Creating a Safe Space for Discussion

It has been a long-held position throughout Christianity that the Scriptures are foundational texts that tell us who we are and how we are to live before God. People on both sides of this issue still believe this, but they differ widely in how they interpret the Bible. Here are four ways to approach this discussion:

1. *Don't use the Bible merely to win an argument.* This is not a debate about some abstract, theological principle; this is about people. Sexuality touches on the core of who we are and how we relate to others, and conversations surrounding it should be handled with great care. There is a lot of confusion today over what the Bible says about homosexuality and many reasons for that confusion. We need to keep in mind that there are men and women in our churches who live with same-sex attractions—and many of them struggle with this secretly. Many of them are confused when they read these passages about whether or not God truly loves them—and especially when they hear heterosexual Christians discussing the passages. These men and women want to know how to live before God in accordance to his revealed will. Sensitivity, care, and compassion ought to shape the tone of this discussion with everyone.
2. *While it's not about winning an argument, it's also not about drawing a line between "them" and "us."* When we discuss whether or not homosexuality is acceptable before God, those who are heterosexual must include themselves in this discussion. When the Scripture discusses homosexuality, it does so in the context of sexuality overall. It doesn't say homosexuality

is broken and heterosexuality isn't. Everyone experiences broken sexuality at some level.

In fact, there are far more verses in the Bible about broken heterosexuality. Everything is broken in this world after the fall. Everything about our sexuality—our attractions, desires, and behaviors—are impacted by the fall. The sexual boundary laws in the Bible are for everyone. So when you use Scripture to help someone examine this subject, do you shine the light of God's Word into your own heart? Do you acknowledge that everyone, including yourself, needs to obey what it says, and that everyone, on some level, struggles in the area of their own sexuality? No one has been untouched by sin and struggle in this area. In all these discussions, you should always examine your own areas of sexual brokenness and confess ways you, too, have lived outside God's boundaries. Ongoing repentance produces the humility needed to enter into these discussions.

3. *Acknowledge that the Bible is, in many places, not the easiest book to understand.* It was written thousands of years ago; most of us read a translation from the original languages; there are sixty-six different books in two major sections that make up the Christian Scriptures; and there are places, events, and customs from those times that sometimes strike us as being quite foreign. Nevertheless, the church throughout its history has submitted to the Bible as being the essential text that guides our faith and life. Scripture attests to itself as such: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2Tm 3:16–17).

No Christian can, with integrity, affirm any action or behavior without reference to Scripture. While the Bible is a series of texts embedded within a certain time and culture, Christians have always affirmed that it is a "trans-cultural" Word, divinely inspired and able to speak to every generation regarding who God is and how his people are to live.

To examine whether or not something is permissible, an honest wrestling with Scripture has to be the starting point. Its message, its point of view, must be first and foremost. "For the word of God is living and effective It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. No creature is hidden from him, but all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account" (Heb 4:12–13).

Study the Bible, read books and commentaries, and don't be afraid to read scholars who take differing views on the subject. You learn more by trying to understand both sides. Isn't that how you love someone you are trying to understand—by listening and asking questions?

4. *Love and respect those who don't agree with your viewpoint.* We are called to be "correctly teaching the word of truth" (2Tm 2:15) and we "must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach . . . instructing [our] opponents with gentleness" (2Tm 2:24–25). We should do this all the time. But on this topic, it's even more necessary. We live in an ultra-sensitive age. People have seen the damage done by rhetoric that has fostered abuses by one group against another and have become much more vigilant (often hyper-vigilant) about how we communicate. In this atmosphere, disagreeing with what someone else believes, thinks, or does is frequently labeled as either hate speech or an act of shaming someone. It often feels as if no one is allowed to express opinions, say any behavior is wrong, or disagree with others.

What's happening here? As a culture, we have become a people desperate for acceptance. As Western culture has moved more toward the individual as the primary point of meaning and fulfillment, truth is now defined as one's own personal story. There are no longer any agreed-upon moral standards by which behavior can be measured, so we refuse to believe that there's anything wrong with us. There are opposite and different worldviews clashing on this subject. The Christian worldview is

that humanity is in a desperate condition, needing rescue and restoration by Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection on our behalf. The secular worldview believes that we are all essentially good, in need of no help or rescue—only needing more personal freedom to fully authenticate the self. These two worldviews are incompatible at their core. Conflict is inevitable.

While worldviews are clashing, remember that there are also many personal issues at stake. When engaging with those who identify themselves as gay or lesbian or wish to support people they know who identify as such, understand that the historic, orthodox view is one that makes a claim on them. Recognize that to turn away from an identity or life in which one has found personal meaning and support and love is no small matter. So, sensitivities are high. Don't just engage the subject; get to know and love the person you are talking to. There may be no way to avoid conflicting emotions on this, but real love for another person can go a long way toward establishing mutual respect on both sides, even when disagreements remain.

Conclusion

Many people conclude that the Bible is unclear or too dated to understand with any certainty whether homosexuality is permitted for God's people today. But if you truly look at these passages in light of the whole scope of sexuality as described throughout the Bible, and ground that view in the first two chapters of Genesis, then there really isn't any uncertainty at all.

The struggle over this issue is one that is far more emotional than rational. Wanting to be loving and on the side of inclusion, many will either dismiss what the Scriptures say or vigorously reinterpret them to come to another position.

Here is where one needs to step further back from the discussion on sexuality and look at the wider biblical message. Some interpret the entire message of the Bible as being centered in God's love for us, especially his love shown in Jesus. Whatever is loving among people, therefore, is something to celebrate, especially when it comes to including those who have been excluded or treated poorly throughout history.

This is only a partial truth. The central message of the Bible is about God's love, and that message is centered in what Jesus accomplished by his sacrificial death on our behalf. Love is defined by God. God's love is accepting, but it is a love that *intrudes* into our lives and transforms us. His love always disrupts us on the life-path we have personally chosen. His love is not the world's "unconditional love." His love is personal, intense, and relentlessly desirous that we become people who look and act like him: "This is how we know that we love God's children: when we love God and obey his commands" (1Jn 5:2). If we are loving others the way we should, then we will also be obeying God out of a love for him.

For more about what the Bible teaches about homosexuality, see articles "Homosexuality and the Bible: Commonly Disputed Passages" on page 1095 and "Homosexuality and the Bible: The Broader Perspective of Scripture" on page 1509.

*Adapted from "Homosexuality and the Bible: Outdated Advice or Words of Life?" by R. Nicholas Black (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2010).

³⁶ So both of Lot's daughters became pregnant by their father. ³⁷ The firstborn gave birth to a son and named him Moab.^a He is the father of the Moabites of today.^a ³⁸ The younger also gave birth to a son, and she named him Ben-ammi.^b He is the father of the Ammonites of today.^b

Sarah Rescued from Abimelech

20 From there Abraham traveled to the region of the Negev and settled between Kadesh and Shur. While he was staying in Gerar,^c Abraham said about his wife Sarah, "She is my sister."^d So King Abimelech of Gerar had Sarah brought to him.

³ But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, "You are about to die because of the woman you have taken, for she is a married woman."^c

⁴ Now Abimelech had not approached her, so he said, "Lord, would you destroy a nation even though it is innocent? ⁵ Didn't he himself say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'He is my brother.' I did this with a clear conscience^d and clean^e hands."

⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that you did this with a clear conscience.^f I have also kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I have not let you touch her. ⁷ Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet,^e and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, know that you will certainly die, you and all who are yours."

⁸ Early in the morning Abimelech got up, called all his servants together, and personally^g told them all these things, and the men were terrified.

⁹ Then Abimelech called Abraham in and said to him, "What have you done to us? How did I sin against you that you have brought such enormous guilt on me and on my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done."^f ¹⁰ Abimelech also asked Abraham, "What made you do this?"

¹¹ Abraham replied, "I thought, 'There is absolutely no fear of God in this place.'^g They will kill me because of my wife.'^h ¹² Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife.^h ¹³ So when God had me wander from my father's house,^h I said to her: Show your loyalty to me wherever we go and say about me, 'He's my brother.'^h

¹⁴ Then Abimelech took flocks and herds and male and female slaves, gave them to Abraham, and returned his wife Sarah to him. ¹⁵ Abimelech said, "Look, my land is before you. / Settle wherever you want."^h ¹⁶ And he said to Sarah, "Look, I am giving your brother one thousand pieces of silver. It is a verification of your honorⁱ to all who are with you. You are fully vindicated."

¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God,^k and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female slaves so that they could bear children, ¹⁸ for the LORD had completely closed all the wombs in Abimelech's household on account of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

The Birth of Isaac

21 The LORD came to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised.ⁱ ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time God had told him.^m ³ Abraham named his son who was born to him — the one Sarah bore to him — Isaac.ⁿ ⁴ When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded him.^o ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.^p

⁶ Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and everyone who hears will laugh with me."^q ⁷ She also said, "Who would have told Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne a son for him^k in his old age."

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

⁸ The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned. ⁹ But Sarah saw the son mocking — the one Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham.^r ¹⁰ So she said to Abraham, "Drive out this slave with her son, for the son of this slave will not be a coheir with my son Isaac!"^s

¹¹ This was very distressing to^t Abraham because of his son. ¹² But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed^u about the boy and about your slave. Whatever Sarah says

^a19:37 Dt 2:9 ^b19:38 Dt 2:19 ^c20:1 Gn 26:1,6 ^d20:2 Gn 12:13; 26:7 ^e20:7 1Sm 7:5; 2Kg 5:11; Jb 42:8 ^f20:9 Gn 12:19; 26:9 ^g20:11 Neh 5:15; Pr 16:6 ^h20:13 Gn 12:1 ⁱGn 12:13; 20:5 ^j20:15 Gn 13:9; 34:10; 47:6 ^k20:17 Nm 12:13; 21:7; Jms 5:16 ^l21:1 Gn 17:16; 18:10; Gl 4:23 ^m21:2 Gn 17:21; 18:10,14; Heb 11:11 ⁿ21:3 Gn 17:19 ^o21:4 Gn 17:10,12; Ac 7:8 ^p21:5 Gn 17:1,17; Rm 4:19 ^q21:6 Gn 18:12–15 ^r21:9 Gn 16:1,15; Gl 4:29 ^s21:10 Gl 4:30

^a19:37 = From My Father ^b19:38 = Son of My People ^c20:3 Lit is possessed by a husband ^d20:5 Lit with integrity of my heart ^e20:5 Lit cleanness of my ^f20:6 Lit with integrity of your heart ^g20:8 Lit in their ears ^h20:15 Lit Settle in the good in your eyes ⁱ20:16 Lit a covering of the eyes ^j21:6 Isaac = He Laughs; Gn 17:19 ^k21:7 Sam, Tg Jonathan; MT omits him ^l21:11 Lit was very bad in the eyes of ^m21:12 Lit "Let it not be bad in your eyes"

to you, listen to her, because your offspring will be traced through Isaac,^a ¹³ and I will also make a nation of the slave's son^b because he is your offspring."

¹⁴ Early in the morning Abraham got up, took bread and a waterskin, put them on Hagar's shoulders, and sent her and the boy away. She left and wandered in the Wilderness of Beer-sheba. ¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she left the boy under one of the bushes¹⁶ and went and sat at a distance, about a bowshot away, for she said, "I can't bear to watch the boy die!" While she sat at a distance, she^a wept loudly.^c

¹⁷ God heard the boy crying, and the^b angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What's wrong, Hagar? Don't be afraid, for God has heard the boy crying from the place where he is. ¹⁸ Get up, help the boy up, and grasp his hand, for I will make him a great nation." ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes,^d and she saw a well. So she went and filled the waterskin and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰ God was with the boy, and he grew; he settled in the wilderness and became an archer. ²¹ He settled in the Wilderness of Paran, and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Abraham's Covenant with Abimelech

²² At that time Abimelech, accompanied by Phicol the commander of his army,^e said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do."^f ²³ Swear to me by God here and now, that you will not break an agreement with me or with my children and descendants. As I have been loyal to you, so you will be loyal to me and to the country where you are a resident alien."



"God's wisdom says that the more important the decision, the more critical it is to receive counsel from other wise people."

²⁴ And Abraham said, "I swear it." ²⁵ But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well that Abimelech's servants had seized.^g

²⁶ Abimelech replied, "I don't know who did this thing. You didn't report anything to me, so I hadn't heard about it until today."

²⁷ Abraham took flocks and herds and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant.^h ²⁸ Abraham separated seven ewe lambs from the flock. ²⁹ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "Why have you separated these seven ewe lambs?"

³⁰ He replied, "You are to accept the seven ewe lambs from me so that this actⁱ will serve as my witness that I dug this well."

³¹ Therefore that place was called Beer-sheba^b because it was there that the two of them swore an oath. ³² After they had made a covenant at Beer-sheba, Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, left and returned to the land of the Philistines.

³³ Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.^j ³⁴ And Abraham lived as an alien in the land of the Philistines for many days.

The Sacrifice of Isaac

22 After these things God tested Abraham^k and said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he answered.

² "Take your son," he said, "your only son Isaac, whom you love,^l go to the land of Moriah,^m and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

³ So Abraham got up early in the morning,ⁿ saddled his donkey, and took with him

^a21:12 Rm 9:7; Heb 11:18 ^b21:13 Gn 16:10; 21:18; 25:12–18 ^c21:16 Jr 6:26; Am 8:10 ^d21:19 Nm 22:31; 2Kgs 6:17–18,20; Lk 24:16,31 ^e21:22 Gn 20:2; 26:1,26 ^fGn 26:28 ^g21:25 Gn 26:15,18,20–22 ^h21:27 Gn 26:31 ⁱ21:31 Gn 26:33 ^j21:33 Ps 45:6; 48:14; 90:2; 93:2; Is 40:28; Jr 10:10; Rm 16:26; Heb 13:8 ^k22:1 Dt 8:2,16; 1Co 10:13; Heb 11:17; Jms 1:12–14; 1Pt 1:6–7 ^l22:2 Gn 22:12,16; Jr 6:26; Am 8:10; Mk 12:6; Lk 7:12; Jn 3:16; 1Jn 4:9 ^m2Ch 3:1 ⁿ22:3 Jos 3:1

^A21:16 LXX reads *the boy* ^B21:17 Or *an* ^C21:30 Lit *that it* ^D21:31 = Well of the Oath, or Seven Wells

nissah

Hebrew pronunciation	[nis SAH]
CSB translation	<i>test</i>
Uses in Genesis	1
Uses in the OT	36
Focus passage	Genesis 22:1

The verb **nissah** describes *testing* that one gives oneself (Ec 2:1), other people (1Kg 10:1), or various aspects of life (Ec 7:23). Most OT usage depicts either God's *testing* of man or the reverse. Man's *testing* of God is almost always due to lack of faith. People forget what God has

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already done for them (Ps 95:9). They are complaining, rebellious, provocative, and full of excessive desires (Ex 17:2; Ps 78:17–18,41,56). God forbade Israel to *test* him this way (Dt 6:16). God, in contrast, *tested* Israel for the purpose of advancing its welfare (Dt 8:16). He *tested* the Israelites to see what was in their hearts (2Ch 32:31), whether they would obey (Ex 16:4) and love (Dt 13:3) him. So the psalmist invites God to *test* him (Ps 26:2). Passive-reflexive verbs mean *attempt* (Dt 4:34), *try* (Jb 4:2), *venture* (Dt 28:56), or *be used to* (1Sm 17:39).

Dealing with an Angry Spouse

Edward T. Welch



You Are Not Alone

Twenty-five percent of adult women say they have experienced violence at the hands of their spouse or their partner in a dating relationship. Men too can be victims of spousal violence. Eight percent report at least one such incident. But since men are more often violent against women, and women are typically weaker, this article is written especially for women. Statistics are not much comfort. But the numbers remind you that others know the pain of such a living situation, and that resources are available to help you.

Where can you turn for help? If you attend a church, talk to your pastor. If not, find one in your area. Look for a Bible-believing church teaching that Jesus is the Son of God who came and died for our sins, who rose as Lord from the dead. Find a community of people who worship this Jesus and love one another. There you will find hope and direction from the God who sees and hears.

You Are Really Not Alone: Listen to the God-Who-Hears

Your long-term goal should be to know the personal God. This won't magically change your situation, but knowing God does change everything. What would it be like to know you're not alone, you're heard, and the one who hears is acting on your behalf? It would especially make a difference if you knew that this person was the Ruler of the universe. When you want real hands and feet to help you, the knowledge of the invisible God's presence might seem to provide little consolation. But don't let your senses mislead you. God is *really* there. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (Jn 20:29).

The Bible is full of stories about God hearing the cries of his people and coming to their rescue. A woman named Hagar and her young son, for example, were unfairly sent from their home and left in the wilderness to die. But God heard them and said to Hagar, "What's wrong, Hagar? Don't be afraid, for God has heard the boy crying from the place where he is. Get up, help the boy up, and grasp his hand, for I will make him a great nation" (Gn 21:17–18). Like a mother who wakes at the sound of her child, God hears the cries of the oppressed. He gave Hagar and her son water and made her son the father of a great nation.

We may not see all that he is doing, but he is acting.

You Are Not Alone: The God-Who-Hears Wants to Listen to You

God wants to hear *you*. He wants you to direct your cries and fears to him. He will help you to find the words. Psalm 55 can get you started:

My heart shudders within me; terrors of death sweep over me. Fear and trembling grip me; horror has overwhelmed me. I said, "If only I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and find rest. How far away I would flee; I would stay in the wilderness. I would hurry to my shelter from the raging wind and the storm." . . . Now it is not an enemy who insults me—otherwise I could bear it; it is not a foe who rises up against me—otherwise I could hide from him. But it is you, a man who is my peer, my companion and good friend! We used to have close fellowship; we walked with the crowd into the house of God. (Ps 55:4–8,12–14)

Psalm 55 has given a voice to human betrayal for centuries. If the words fit your experience, then you are now part of a much larger body of people who have sung this psalm and made it their own. King David wrote this psalm on

behalf of the perfect King who was to come after him. It is Jesus's psalm and his words you're sharing in. *He* was the innocent victim of evil people. He was betrayed, tortured, and suffered a terrible death at their hands (Mk 14–15). Join all those who follow him.

Keep Listening: The God-Who-Hears Is Against Injustice

The God who came and experienced oppression and injustice also stands against it. God pronounces grief and judgment on all who use their authority or power to oppress. He said to those in Jeremiah's day, "You have scattered my flock, banished them, and have not attended to them. I am about to attend to you because of your evil acts" (Jr 23:2). God wants you to respond by depending on him to be your defender. He wants you to trust that he is hearing your cries and is going to act on your behalf.

Action Steps

You may not know exactly what kind of help you need. Your path isn't clearly marked, and you're not sure what to do next. That makes it even more important for you to ask for help from someone else.

You may be feeling shame. "What kind of wife gets treated this badly by her husband?" The truth is that someone else's cruel anger is not your fault. Even if you incite it, and that is rarely the case, there is *never* any excuse for cruelty. Your spouse, when he is sinfully angry, is caring only about himself and his own desires (Jms 1:13–15). There isn't a victimized woman in the world who doesn't feel that she is somehow at fault—but this is his sin alone.

If Necessary, Find Refuge

If you feel threatened, then you should get protection. If children are threatened, this is essential. Every county in the United States has domestic abuse hot lines that will provide you with resources. Orders of protection from abuse are available through your local courthouse. Friends have an extra room or two. If you choose to leave, that is not necessarily a first step toward divorce. It is better understood as a statement of hope and a desire to see change in the marriage relationship.

Marriage is a covenant that should not be broken unless we have God's permission (Mt 19:6). Do you have permission when there is domestic violence? This is a difficult question which you should not try to answer on your own. But know this for certain: God opposes such evil and intends care for the oppressed.

Listen to the Advice of Wise Friends

Ask your pastor and other wise people who love Jesus to guide you. Decisions about your marriage should not be made alone. *God's wisdom says that the more important the decision, the more critical it is to receive counsel from other wise people.*

Unfortunately, most women who are suffering as you are don't take these steps. Some who *do* quickly renege on them and go back to the abusive situation. Why? Fear of retaliation, fear of aloneness, love for the perpetrator, hope that things at home will change, or the lingering feeling that it's your fault. These are powerful tugs that make decisive action very difficult. The decision is yours, but listen to the consensus among the wise people around you. If you have fears and doubts about their counsel, voice them or seek additional wise counsel.

Be Guided by Love

When you *need* someone more than you love that person, you will be prone to anger, because you don't get the love that feels so critical to you. You will also be prone to fear, because the other person has the power to give or withhold what you think you need.

When you set your sights on love, the possibilities are limitless. Love gives you the clarity to make difficult decisions on the fly. Should you speak out or be quiet? Love can guide you more than you realize. Even going to someone else and asking for advice and help with your difficult relationship can be an expression

of love. You need help because you care about your partner and your children. His foolish, selfish lifestyle is not only hurting you and others, it's also hurting him because it's spiritually self-destructive. Real love wants to warn the fool. It wants to rescue, if it is at all possible, the self-destructive person from the wrath of God.

Love can be patient and kind (1Co 13). It can also rebuke (Lv 19:17). It can stand against injustice and confront another person in their sin (Mt 18:15–17). The challenge is to keep the scales tipped in love's favor.

What to Do When Your Spouse Is Angry

Outfitted with love you have more power than you think. Love comes from the Spirit of the living God, and whenever you encounter the Spirit in the Bible, you encounter power. The power, of course, is the power of wisdom and love, and there are times when it can disarm an angry man.

Because of the limitless possibilities of love, let wise friends brainstorm and pray with you. Here are some things that the Spirit of power can help you do when you are faced with an angry spouse:

- Ask him why he thinks you are the enemy.
- Leave the house when he is sinfully angry.
- Go and get help instead of being silenced by your shame and his threats.
- Accept responsibility for your own sinful responses, but don't accept responsibility for his.
- Tell him what it's like to be the recipient of his anger and hatred. Angry people are blind to how they hurt others.
- Ask him if he thinks he has a problem.
- Speak with a humility that's more powerful than anger. Ask what he thinks you did that was wrong. You don't have to defend your reputation before him.
- If he claims to want to change, ask him what steps he is taking to change.
- Keep James 4:1–2 in mind. You are witnessing his selfish desires running amok. Be careful that you don't become an imitator of such behavior.
- Don't minimize his destructive behavior. Sinful anger is called hatred and murder (Mt 5:21–22).
- Read through the book of Proverbs to see what it says about anger (see 12:18; 15:1,18; 19:19; 22:24; 29:11,22; 30:33).
- Remember, it is possible to overcome evil with good.

This is only a sketchy map. The details will have to be worked out within your community of counselors. What guarantees do you have? God doesn't guarantee the momentary peace and quiet you might be longing for; instead, he promises you something much more lasting. He promises that, as you turn and trust Jesus Christ, you will become more like him; that his Spirit will help you love more than you need to be loved; that God will be with you, he will hear and act on your behalf; and that, although the Spirit of God is the one who changes hearts, you have more power than you know—the power to both know and promote peace.

*Adapted from "Living with an Angry Spouse: Help for Victims of Abuse" Edward T. Welch (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2008).

two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. ⁴On the third day^a Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you." ⁶Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac.^b In his hand he took the fire and the knife,^c and the two of them walked on together.

⁷Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, "My father."

And he replied, "Here I am, my son."

Isaac said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸Abraham answered, "God himself will provide^d the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Then the two of them walked on together.

⁹When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac^e and placed him on the altar^e on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

¹¹But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

He replied, "Here I am."

¹²Then he said, "Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me."^f ¹³Abraham looked up and saw a ram^c caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴And Abraham named that place The LORD Will Provide,^g so today it is said, "It will be provided^e on the LORD's mountain."

¹⁵Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶and said, "By myself I have sworn,"^g this is the LORD's declaration: "Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your only son, ¹⁷I will indeed bless you^h and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the skyⁱ and the sand on the seashore.^j Your offspring will possess the city gates of their^f enemies.^k ¹⁸And all

the nations of the earth will be blessed^e by your offspring^l because you have obeyed my command."

¹⁹Abraham went back to his young men, and they got up and went together to Beer-sheba. And Abraham settled in Beer-sheba.

Rebekah's Family

²⁰Now after these things Abraham was told, "Milcah also has borne sons to your brother Nahor:^m ²¹Uz his firstborn, his brother Buz, Kemuel the father of Aram, ²²Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel."ⁿ ²³And Bethuel fathered Rebekah.^o Milcah bore these eight to Nahor, Abraham's brother. ²⁴His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Sarah's Burial

23 Now Sarah lived 127 years; these were all the years of her life. ²Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron^o) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

³When Abraham got up from beside his dead wife, he spoke to the Hethites: ⁴"I am an alien residing among you.^p Give me burial property among you so that I can bury my dead."^{h,q}

⁵The Hethites replied to Abraham,^r ⁶"Listen to us, my lord. You are a prince of God^l among us. Bury your dead in our finest burial place.^k None of us will withhold from you his burial place for burying your dead."

⁷Then Abraham rose and bowed down to the Hethites, the people of the land. ⁸He said to them, "If you are willing for me to bury my dead, listen to me and ask Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf^q to give me the cave of Machpelah that belongs to him; it is at the end of his field. Let him give it to me in your presence, for the full price, as burial property."

¹⁰Ephron was sitting among the Hethites. So in the hearing^l of all the Hethites who came to the gate of his city,^r Ephron the Hethite answered Abraham: ¹¹"No, my lord. Listen to me. I give you the field, and I

^a22:4 Ex 19:11,16; Jos 9:17; Jdg 20:30; 2Sm 1:2; 1Kg 12:12; 2Kg 20:5; Est 5:1; Hs 6:2; Mt 17:23 ^b22:6 Jn 19:17 ^cJdg 19:29; Pr 30:14

^d22:8 Gn 22:14 ^e22:9 Heb 11:17; Jms 2:21 ^f22:12 Rm 8:32

^g22:16 Ps 105:9; Lk 1:73; Heb 6:13 ^h22:17 Heb 6:14 ⁱGn 15:5; 26:4;

Jr 33:22; Heb 11:12 ^jGn 13:16; 32:12 ^kGn 24:60 ^l22:18 Gn 12:3; 26:4;

Ac 3:25; Gl 3:8 ^m22:20 Gn 11:29 ⁿ22:23 Gn 24:15 ^o23:2 Gn 35:27;

Jos 14:15; 15:13; 21:11; Jdg 1:10 ^p23:4 Gn 17:8; Lv 25:23; 1Ch 29:15; Ps 39:12;

105:12; Heb 11:9,13 ^qGn 49:30; Ac 7:16 ^r23:10 Gn 34:20,24; Ru 4:1

^a22:8 Lit see ^b22:9 Or *Isaac hand and foot* ^c22:13 Some Hb mss, Sam, LXX, Syr, Tg; other Hb mss read *saw behind him a ram*
^d22:14 = *Yahweh-yireh* ^e22:14 Or *He will be seen* ^f22:17 Lit *his* ^g22:18 Or *will consider themselves blessed, or will find blessing* ^h23:4 Lit *dead from before me* ⁱ23:5 Lit *Abraham, saying to him* ^j23:6 Or *a mighty prince*
^k23:6 Or *finest graves* ^l23:10 Lit *ears*, also in vv. 13,16

give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the sight^a of my people. Bury your dead.”

¹² Abraham bowed down to the people of the land ¹³ and said to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, “Listen to me, if you please. Let me pay the price of the field. Accept it from me, and let me bury my dead there.”

¹⁴ Ephron answered Abraham and said to him, ¹⁵ “My lord, listen to me. Land worth four hundred shekels of silver^a — what is that between you and me? Bury your dead.”

¹⁶ Abraham agreed with Ephron, and Abraham weighed out to Ephron the silver that he had agreed to in the hearing of the Hethites: four hundred standard shekels^b of silver.^b

¹⁷ So Ephron’s field^c at Machpelah near Mamre — the field with its cave and all the trees anywhere within the boundaries of the field — became ¹⁸ Abraham’s possession in the sight of all the Hethites who came to the gate of his city. ¹⁹ After this, Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field at Machpelah near Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. ²⁰ The field with its cave passed from the Hethites to Abraham^d as burial property.

A Wife for Isaac

24 Abraham was now old, getting on in years,^e and the LORD had blessed him in everything. ² Abraham said to his servant, the elder of his household who managed all he owned, “Place your hand under my thigh,^f ³ and I will have you swear by the LORD, God of heaven and God of earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I live,^g ⁴ but will go to my land and my family to take a wife for my son Isaac.”

⁵ The servant said to him, “Suppose the woman is unwilling to follow me to this land? Should I have your son go back to the land you came from?”

⁶ Abraham answered him, “Make sure that you don’t take my son back there. ⁷ The LORD, the God of heaven,^h who took me from my father’s house and from my native land,ⁱ who spoke to me and swore to me, ‘I will give this land to your offspring’^{j,k} — he will send his angel before you,^k and you can take a wife for my son from there. ⁸ If the woman is unwilling to follow you, then you are free from this oath to me,^l but don’t let my son go back there.” ⁹ So the servant placed his hand under his master Abraham’s thigh and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

¹⁰ The servant took ten of his master’s camels, and with all kinds of his master’s goods in hand, he went to Aram-naharaim, to Nahor’s town. ¹¹ At evening, the time when women went out to draw water, he made the camels kneel beside a well outside the town.

¹² “LORD, God of my master Abraham,” he prayed, “make this happen for me today,^m and show kindness to my master Abraham. ¹³ I am standing hereⁿ at the spring where the daughters of the men of the town are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ Let the girl to whom I say, ‘Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,’ and who responds, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels also’ — let her be the one you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master.”

¹⁵ Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah — daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah,^o the wife of Abraham’s brother Nahor — coming with a jug on her shoulder. ¹⁶ Now the girl was very beautiful,^p a virgin — no man had been intimate with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up. ¹⁷ Then the servant ran to meet her and said, “Please let me have a little water from your jug.”

¹⁸ She replied, “Drink, my lord.” She quickly lowered her jug to her hand and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I’ll also draw water for your camels until they have had enough to drink.”^q ²⁰ She quickly emptied her jug into the trough and hurried to the well again to draw water. She drew water for all his camels ²¹ while the man silently watched her to see whether or not the LORD had made his journey a success.

²² As the camels finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing half a shekel, and for her wrists two bracelets weighing ten shekels of gold. ²³ “Whose daughter are you?” he asked. “Please tell me, is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?”

²⁴ She answered him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.” ²⁵ She also said to him, “We have plenty of straw and feed and a place to spend the night.”

^a 23:15 Ex 30:13; Ezk 45:12 ^b 23:16 Jr 32:9; Zch 11:12 ^c 23:17 Gn 25:9; 49:29–32; 50:13 ^d 23:20 Jr 32:10–14 ^e 24:1 Gn 18:11; Jos 13:1; 23:1–2; 1Kg 1:1 ^f 24:2 Gn 47:29; Ex 1:5 ^g 24:3 Gn 26:34,35; 27:46; Dt 7:3; 2Co 6:14 ^h 24:7 2Ch 36:23; Ezr 1:2 ⁱ Gn 12:1 ^j Gn 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; Ex 32:13 ^k Gn 16:7; 21:17; 22:11; Ex 23:20,23 ^l 24:8 Jos 2:17–20 ^m 24:12 Gn 27:20 ⁿ 24:13–14 Gn 24:43–44 ^o 24:15 Gn 11:29; 22:23 ^p 24:16 Gn 12:11; 26:7; 29:17

^a 23:11 Lit in the eyes of the sons ^b 23:16 Lit 400 shekels passing to the merchant ^c 24:1 Lit days ^d 24:7 Lit seed ^e 24:19 Lit they are finished drinking

²⁶ Then the man knelt low, worshiped the LORD,^a ²⁷ and said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld his kindness and faithfulness from my master.^b As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives."

²⁸ The girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. ²⁹ Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban,^c and Laban ran out to the man at the spring. ³⁰ As soon as he had seen the ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he had heard his sister Rebekah's words — "The man said this to me!" — he went to the man. He was standing there by the camels at the spring.

³¹ Laban said, "Come, you who are blessed by the LORD.^d Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels."³² So the man came to the house, and the camels were unloaded.^e Straw and feed were given to the camels, and water was brought to wash his feet and the feet of the men with him.

³³ A meal was set before him, but he said, "I will not eat until I have said what I have to say."

So Laban said, "Please speak."

³⁴ "I am Abraham's servant," he said. ³⁵ "The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become rich. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, and camels and donkeys. ³⁶ Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master in her^a old age,^f and he has given him everything he owns.^g ³⁷ My master put me under this oath: 'You will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in whose land I live ³⁸ but will go to my father's family and to my clan to take a wife for my son.'³⁹ But I said to my master, 'Suppose the woman will not come back with me?' ⁴⁰ He said to me, 'The LORD before whom I have walked^h will send his angel with you and make your journey a success, and you will take a wife for my son from my clan and from my father's family. ⁴¹ Then you will be free from my oath if you go to my family and they do not give her to you — you will be free from my oath.'

⁴² "Today when I came to the spring, I prayed: LORD, God of my master Abraham, if only you will make my journey successful! ⁴³ I am standing here at a spring. Let the young woman^b who comes out to draw

water, and I say to her, 'Please let me drink a little water from your jug,' ⁴⁴ and who responds to me, 'Drink, and I'll draw water for your camels also' — let her be the woman the LORD has appointed for my master's son.

⁴⁵ "Before I had finished praying silently,ⁱ there was Rebekah coming with her jug on her shoulder, and she went down to the spring and drew water. So I said to her, 'Please let me have a drink.'⁴⁶ She quickly lowered her jug from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels also.' So I drank, and she also watered the camels. ⁴⁷ Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She responded, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring on her nose^j and the bracelets on her wrists. ⁴⁸ Then I knelt low, worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who guided me on the right way to take the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son. ⁴⁹ Now, if you are going to show kindness and faithfulness to my master,^k tell me; if not, tell me, and I will go elsewhere."^c

⁵⁰ Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD; we have no choice in the matter.^d ⁵¹ Rebekah is here in front of you. Take her and go, and let her be a wife for your master's son, just as the LORD has spoken."

⁵² When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed to the ground before the LORD. ⁵³ Then he brought out objects of silver and gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious gifts to her brother and her mother. ⁵⁴ Then he and the men with him ate and drank and spent the night.

When they got up in the morning, he said, "Send me to my master."

⁵⁵ But her brother and mother said, "Let the girl stay with us for about ten days. Then she^e can go."

⁵⁶ But he responded to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has made my journey a success. Send me away so that I may go to my master."

⁵⁷ So they said, "Let's call the girl and ask her opinion."^f

⁵⁸ They called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?"

^a24:26 Ex 4:31 ^b24:27 Ru 2:20; Ezr 9:9; Neh 9:17 ^c24:29 Gn 25:20; 28:2; 29:5 ^d24:31 Gn 26:29; Jdg 17:2; Ru 3:10 ^e24:32 Gn 43:24; Jdg 19:21 ^f24:36 Gn 21:2 ^gGn 25:5 ^h24:40 Gn 17:1; 1Sm 2:30; 1Kg 2:4; 8:23; 2Kg 20:3; Ps 116:9 ⁱ24:45 1Sm 1:13 ^j24:47 Ezk 16:11–12 ^k24:49 Gn 47:29; Jos 2:14 ^l24:50 Gn 31:24,29; 2Sm 13:22

^a24:36 Sam, LXX read his ^b24:43 Or the virgin ^c24:49 Lit go to the right or to the left ^d24:50 Lit we cannot say to you anything bad or good ^e24:55 Or you ^f24:57 Lit mouth

She replied, “I will go.”⁵⁹ So they sent away their sister Rebekah with the one who had nursed and raised her,^{a,a} and Abraham’s servant and his men.

⁶⁰ They blessed Rebekah, saying to her:
Our sister, may you become
thousands upon ten thousands.^b
May your offspring possess
the city gates of their^b enemies.^c

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her female servants got up, mounted the camels, and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

⁶² Now Isaac was returning from Beer-lahai-roi,^{c,d} for he was living in the Negev region.⁶³ In the early evening Isaac went out to walk^d in the field, and looking up he saw camels coming.⁶⁴ Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she got down from her camel⁶⁵ and asked the servant, “Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?”

The servant answered, “It is my master.” So she took her veil and covered herself.⁶⁶ Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done.

⁶⁷ And Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah and took Rebekah to be his wife. Isaac loved her, and he was comforted after his mother’s death.^e

Abraham’s Other Wife and Sons

25 Abraham had taken^e another wife, whose name was Keturah,^{f,2} and she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.³ Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan. Dedan’s sons were the Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim.⁴ And Midian’s sons were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were sons of Keturah.⁵ Abraham gave everything he owned to Isaac.^g⁶ But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines, and while he was still alive he sent them eastward, away from his son Isaac, to the land of the East.^h

Abraham’s Death

⁷ This is the length of Abraham’s life:^f 175 years.⁸ He took his last breath and died at a good old age,ⁱ old and contented,^g and he was gathered to his people.^j⁹ His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah^k near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hethite.¹⁰ This was the

field that Abraham bought from the Hethites.^l Abraham was buried there with his wife Sarah.¹¹ After Abraham’s death, God blessed his son Isaac, who lived near Beer-lahai-roi.^m

Ishmael’s Family Records

¹² These are the family recordsⁿ of Abraham’s son Ishmael,^o whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s slave, bore to Abraham.¹³ These are the names of Ishmael’s sons; their names according to the family records are Nebaioth, Ishmael’s firstborn, then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,¹⁴ Mishma, Dumah, Massa,¹⁵ Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.¹⁶ These are Ishmael’s sons, and these are their names by their settlements and encampments: twelve leaders^{h,p} of their clans.¹⁷ This is the length^l of Ishmael’s life: 137 years. He took his last breath and died, and was gathered to his people.¹⁸ And they^k settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt as you go toward Asshur.^l He^m stayed nearⁿ all his relatives.^q

The Birth of Jacob and Esau

¹⁹ These are the family records of Isaac son of Abraham. Abraham fathered Isaac.^r²⁰ Isaac was forty years old when he took as his wife Rebekah^s daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram^t and sister of Laban the Aramean.^u²¹ Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife because she was childless.^v The LORD was receptive to his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived.^w²² But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?”^o So she went to inquire of the LORD.^x²³ And the LORD said to her:

Two nations are in your womb;
two peoples will come from you
and be separated.
One people will be stronger
than the other,^y
and the older will serve
the younger.^z

^a24:59 Gn 35:8 ^b24:60 Gn 17:16 ^cGn 22:17 ^d24:62 Gn 16:14; 25:11
^e24:67 Gn 23:1–2 ^f25:1–4 1Ch 1:32–33 ^g25:5 Gn 24:35–36
^h25:6 Gn 21:34 ⁱ25:8 Gn 15:15; 47:8–9 ^jGn 25:17; 35:29; 49:29,33
^k25:9 Gn 23:17–18; 49:29–30; 50:13 ^l25:10 Gn 23:16; 50:13
^m25:11 Gn 16:14; 24:62 ⁿ25:12 Gn 2:4; 25:19 ^o25:12–16 1Ch 1:29–31
^p25:16 Gn 17:20 ^q25:18 Gn 16:12 ^r25:19 Mt 1:2 ^s25:20 Gn 24:15,29,67
^tGn 22:23 ^uGn 24:29 ^v25:21 Gn 11:30; 29:31; Ex 23:26; Jdg 13:2–3;
1Sm 2:5; Jb 24:21; Is 54:1; Lk 1:36; 23:29; Gl 4:27; Heb 11:11
^w1Sm 1:17; 1Ch 5:20; 2Ch 33:13; Ezr 8:23; Ps 127:3; Rm 9:10 ^x25:22 1Sm 9:9; 10:22
^y25:23 2Sm 8:14; Ob 18–21 ^zGn 27:29; Mal 1:2–3; Rm 9:12

^a24:59 Lit with her wet nurse; Gn 35:8 ^b24:60 Lit his ^c24:62 = A Well of the Living One Who Sees Me ^d24:63 Or pray, or meditate; Hb obscure ^e25:1 Or Abraham took ^f25:7 Lit And these are the days of the years of the life of Abraham that he lived ^g25:8 Sam, LXX, Syr read full of days ^h25:16 Or chieftains ⁱ25:16 Or peoples ^j25:17 Lit And these are the years ^k25:18 LXX, Vg read he ^l25:18 Or Assyria ^m25:18 = Ishmael and his descendants ⁿ25:18 Or He settled down alongside of ^o25:22 Lit said, “If thus, why this I?”

²⁴ When her time came to give birth, there were indeed twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first one came out red-looking,^A covered with hair^B like a fur coat, and they named him Esau.^a ²⁶ After this, his brother came out grasping Esau's heel with his hand.^b So he was named Jacob.^c Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.

Esau Sells His Birthright

²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter, an outdoorsman,^D but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home.^E ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.^d ²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field exhausted. ³⁰ He said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, because I'm exhausted." That is why he was also named Edom.^f

³¹ Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

³² "Look," said Esau, "I'm about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?"

³³ Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to Jacob and sold his birthright to him. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave bread and lentil stew to Esau; he ate, drank, got up, and went away. So Esau despised his birthright.^e

The Promise Reaffirmed to Isaac

26 There was another famine in the land in addition to the one that had occurred in Abraham's time.^f And Isaac went to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, at Gerar.^g ² The LORD appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt. Live in the land that I tell you about; ³ stay in this land as an alien, and I will be with you and bless you.^h For I will give all these lands to you and your offspring,ⁱ and I will confirm the oath that I swore to your father Abraham.^j ⁴ I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky, I will give your offspring all these lands, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed^g by your offspring,^k because Abraham listened to me and kept my mandate, my commands, my statutes, and my instructions."^l ⁶ So Isaac settled in Gerar.

Isaac's Deception

⁷ When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, "She is my sister,"^m for he was

afraid to say "my wife," thinking,ⁿ "The men of the place will kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is a beautiful woman."^o ⁸ When Isaac had been there for some time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from the window and was surprised to see^h Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah.

⁹ Abimelech sent for Isaac and said, "So she is really your wife! How could you say, 'She is my sister'?"

Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might die on account of her."

¹⁰ Then Abimelech said, "What have you done to us? One of the people could easily have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us."^p ¹¹ So Abimelech warned all the people, "Whoever harms this man or his wife will certainly be put to death."

Conflicts over Wells

¹² Isaac sowed seed in that land, and in that year he reaped¹ a hundred times what was sown. The LORD blessed him,^q ¹³ and the man became rich and kept getting richer until he was very wealthy. ¹⁴ He had flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, and many slaves, and the Philistines were envious of him. ¹⁵ Philistines stopped up all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham,^r filling them with dirt. ¹⁶ And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Leave us, for you are much too powerful for us."^j

¹⁷ So Isaac left there, camped in the Gerar Valley, and lived there. ¹⁸ Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham and that the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died. He gave them the same names his father had given them. ¹⁹ Then Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found a well of spring^k water there. ²⁰ But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen and said, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek¹ because they argued with him.^s ²¹ Then they dug another well and quarreled over that one also, so he named it Sitnah.^m ²² He moved from there and dug another, and they did not quarrel over it. He named it Rehoboth^N

^a25:25 Gn 27:11,16,23 ^b25:26 Hs 12:3 ^cGn 27:36 ^d25:28 Gn 27:4–9
^e25:34 Heb 12:16–17 ^f26:1 Gn 12:10 ^gGn 20:2 ^h26:3 Gn 12:2; 26:24;
 28:15; 31:3 ⁱGn 12:7; 13:15; 15:18 ^jGn 22:16–18; Ps 105:9 ^k26:4 Gn 12:3;
 18:18; Ac 3:25; Gl 3:8 ^l26:5 Lv 18:30; Dt 11:1 ^m26:7 Gn 12:13; 20:5
ⁿPr 29:25 ^oGn 24:16 ^p26:10 Gn 20:8–10 ^q26:12 Gn 24:1,35
^r26:15 Gn 21:30 ^s26:20 Gn 21:25

^A25:25 In Hb, *red-looking* sounds like "Edom"; Gn 32:3. ^B25:25 In Hb, *hair* sounds like "Seir"; Gn 32:3. ^C25:26 = He Grasps the Heel
^D25:27 Lit a man of the field ^E25:27 Lit man living in tents ^F25:30 = Red ^G26:4 Or will consider themselves blessed
^H26:8 Or and he looked and behold — ^I26:12 Lit found ^J26:16 Or are more numerous than we are ^K26:19 Lit living
^L26:20 = Argument ^M26:21 = Hostility ^N26:22 = Open Spaces

and said, “For now the LORD has made space for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.”

The LORD Appears to Isaac

²³ From there he went up to Beer-sheba, ²⁴ and the LORD appeared to him that night and said, “I am the God of your father Abraham. ^a Do not be afraid, for I am with you. ^b I will bless you and multiply your offspring because of my servant Abraham.”

²⁵ So he built an altar there, ^c called on the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there. Isaac’s servants also dug a well there. ^d

Covenant with Abimelech

²⁶ Now Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army. ^e ²⁷ Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me? You hated me and sent me away from you.”

²⁸ They replied, “We have clearly seen how the LORD has been with you. We think there should be an oath between two parties — between us and you. Let us make a covenant with you: ²⁹ You will not harm us, just as we have not harmed you but have done only what was good to you, sending you away in peace. You are now blessed by the LORD.” ^f

³⁰ So he prepared a banquet for them, and they ate and drank. ³¹ They got up early in the morning and swore an oath to each other. ^g Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace. ³² On that same day Isaac’s servants came to tell him about the well they had dug, saying to him, “We have found water!” ^h ³³ He called it Sheba. ^b Therefore the name of the city is still Beer-sheba ^c today.

Esau’s Wives

³⁴ When Esau was forty years old, he took as his wives Judith daughter of Beeri the Hethite, and Basemath daughter of Elon the Hethite. ⁱ ³⁵ They made life bitter ^o for Isaac and Rebekah. ^k

The Stolen Blessing

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could not see, ^l he called his older son Esau and said to him, “My son.”

And he answered, “Here I am.”

² He said, “Look, I am old and do not know the day of my death. ³ So now take your hunting gear, your quiver and bow, and go out in the field to hunt some game for me.” ^m

⁴ Then make me a delicious meal that I love and bring it to me to eat, so that I can bless you before I die.” ⁿ

⁵ Now Rebekah was listening to what Isaac said to his son Esau. So while Esau went to the field to hunt some game to bring in, ⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Listen! I heard your father talking with your brother Esau. He said, ⁷ ‘Bring me game and make a delicious meal for me to eat so that I can bless you in the LORD’s presence before I die.’ ⁸ Now, my son, listen to me and do what I tell you. ⁹ Go to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, and I will make them into a delicious meal for your father — the kind he loves. ¹⁰ Then take it to your father to eat so that he may bless you before he dies.”

¹¹ Jacob answered Rebekah his mother, “Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am a man with smooth skin. ^o ¹² Suppose my father touches me. Then I will be revealed to him as a deceiver and bring a curse rather than a blessing on myself.”

¹³ His mother said to him, “Your curse be on me, my son. Just obey me and go get them for me.”

¹⁴ So he went and got the goats and brought them to his mother, and his mother made the delicious food his father loved. ¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best clothes of her older son Esau, which were in the house, and had her younger son Jacob wear them. ¹⁶ She put the skins of the young goats on his hands and the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷ Then she handed the delicious food and the bread she had made to her son Jacob.

¹⁸ When he came to his father, he said, “My father.”

And he answered, “Here I am. Who are you, my son?”

¹⁹ Jacob replied to his father, “I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may bless me.”

²⁰ But Isaac said to his son, “How did you ever find it so quickly, my son?”

He replied, “Because the LORD your God made it happen for me.”

²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Please come closer so I can touch you, my son. Are you really my son Esau or not?”

^a 26:24 Gn 17:7–8; 24:12; Ex 3:6; Ac 7:32 ^b Gn 21:17; Ex 20:20; 2Kg 6:16; Is 41:10; 43:15 ^c 26:25 Gn 8:20; 12:7; 13:18; 35:7; Ex 17:15; Jos 8:30 ^d Gn 26:32 ^e 26:26 Gn 21:22 ^f 26:29 Gn 24:31; Ps 115:15 ^g 26:31 Gn 21:31 ^h 26:32 Gn 26:19 ⁱ 26:33 Gn 21:30–31 ^j 26:34 Gn 28:9; 36:2–3 ^k 26:35 Gn 27:46 ^l 27:1 Gn 48:10; 1Sm 3:2 ^m 27:3 Gn 25:27–28 ⁿ 27:4 Gn 27:19,25,31; 48:9,15–16; Dt 33:1; Heb 11:20 ^o 27:11 Gn 25:25

^A 26:31 Lit *swore, each man to his brother* ^B 26:33 Or *Shibah* ^C 26:33 = Well of the Oath ^D 26:35 Lit *And they became bitterness of spirit*

²² So Jacob came closer to his father Isaac. When he touched him, he said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ²³ He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. ²⁴ Again he asked, "Are you really my son Esau?"

And he replied, "I am."

²⁵ Then he said, "Bring it closer to me, and let me eat some of my son's game so that I can bless you." Jacob brought it closer to him, and he ate; he brought him wine, and he drank.

²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come closer and kiss me, my son." ²⁷ So he came closer and kissed him. When Isaac smelled^a his clothes, he blessed him and said:

Ah, the smell of my son
is like the smell of a field
that the LORD has blessed.

²⁸ May God give to you —
from the dew of the sky^a
and from the richness of the land^b —
an abundance of grain and new wine.^c

²⁹ May peoples serve you^d
and nations bow in homage to you.
Be master over your relatives;
may your mother's sons bow
in homage to you.
Those who curse you will be cursed,
and those who bless you
will be blessed.^e

³⁰ As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob and Jacob had left the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau arrived from his hunting. ³¹ He had also made some delicious food and brought it to his father. He said to his father, "Let my father get up and eat some of his son's game, so that you may bless me."

³² But his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?"

He answered, "I am Esau your firstborn son."

³³ Isaac began to tremble uncontrollably. "Who was it then," he said, "who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it all before you came in, and I blessed him. Indeed, he will be blessed!"

³⁴ When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me too, my father!"^f

³⁵ But he replied, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing."

³⁶ So he said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob?^g For he has cheated me twice now. He took my birthright, and look, now he has taken my blessing." Then he asked, "Haven't you saved a blessing for me?"

³⁷ But Isaac answered Esau, "Look, I have made him a master over you, have given him all of his relatives as his servants, and have sustained him with grain and new wine. What then can I do for you, my son?"

³⁸ Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" And Esau wept loudly.^c

³⁹ His father Isaac answered him,
Look, your dwelling place will be
away from the richness of the land,
away from the dew of the sky above.

⁴⁰ You will live by your sword,
and you will serve your brother.
But when you rebel,^d
you will break his yoke
from your neck.

Esau's Anger

⁴¹ Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. And Esau determined in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

⁴² When the words of her older son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she summoned her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Listen, your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. ⁴³ So now, my son, listen to me. Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, ⁴⁴ and stay with him for a few days until your brother's anger subsides — ⁴⁵ until your brother's rage turns away from you and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send for you and bring you back from there. Why should I lose you both in one day?"

⁴⁶ So Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm sick of my life because of these Hethite girls.^h If Jacob marries someone from around here,^e like these Hethite girls, what good is my life?"ⁱ

Jacob's Departure

28 So Isaac summoned Jacob, blessed him, and commanded him, "Do not marry a Canaanite girl. ² Go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father. Marry one of the daughters

^a 27:28 Gn 27:39; Dt 32:2; 33:13,28; 2Sm 1:21; Pr 3:20; Is 18:4; Hs 14:5; Hg 1:10; Zch 8:12 ^bNm 18:12 ^cDt 7:13; Jl 2:19 ^d27:29 Gn 25:23; Is 45:14; 49:7,23; 60:12–14 ^eGn 12:3; Nm 24:9 ^f27:34 Heb 12:17 ^g27:36 Gn 25:26,32–34 ^h27:46 Gn 26:34–35; 28:8 ⁱGn 24:3

^a27:27 Lit *smelled the smell of* ^b27:36 = He Grasps the Heel ^c27:38 Lit *Esau lifted up his voice and wept* ^d27:40 Hb obscure ^e27:46 Lit *someone like these daughters of the land*

of Laban, your mother's brother.³ May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you^a so that you become an assembly of peoples.^b May God give you and your offspring the blessing of Abraham^c so that you may possess the land where you live as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.^d So Isaac sent Jacob to Paddan-aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

⁶ Esau noticed that Isaac blessed Jacob and sent him to Paddan-aram to get a wife there. When he blessed him, Isaac commanded Jacob, "Do not marry a Canaanite girl."⁷ And Jacob listened to his father and mother and went to Paddan-aram.⁸ Esau realized that his father Isaac disapproved of the Canaanite women,^e so Esau went to Ishmael and married, in addition to his other wives, Mahalath daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son. She was the sister of Nebaioth.

Jacob at Bethel

¹⁰ Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran.¹¹ He reached a certain place and spent the night there because the sun had set. He took one of the stones from the place, put it there at his head, and lay down in that place.¹² And he dreamed:^f A stairway was set on the ground with its top reaching the sky, and God's angels were going up and down on it.¹³ The LORD was standing there beside him,^g saying, "I am the LORD,^h the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your offspring the land on which you are lying.¹⁴ Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth,ⁱ and you will spread out toward the west, the east, the north, and the south. All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^j ¹⁵ Look, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land,^k for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven."

¹⁸ Early in the morning Jacob took the stone that was near his head and set it up

as a marker. He poured oil on top of it¹⁹ and named the place Bethel,⁸ though previously the city was named Luz.^m ²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow:ⁿ "If God will be with me and watch over me during this journey I'm making, if he provides me with food to eat and clothing to wear,²¹ and if I return safely to my father's family,^o then the LORD will be my God.^p ²² This stone that I have set up as a marker will be God's house, and I will give to you a tenth of all that you give me."^q

Jacob Meets Rachel

29 Jacob resumed his journey^c and went to the eastern country.^{d,r} ² He looked and saw a well in a field. Three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it because the sheep were watered from this well. But a large stone covered the opening of the well.³ The shepherds would roll the stone from the opening of the well and water the sheep when all the flocks^e were gathered there. Then they would return the stone to its place over the well's opening.

⁴ Jacob asked the men at the well, "My brothers! Where are you from?"

"We're from Haran," they answered.

⁵ "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?" Jacob asked them.

They answered, "We know him."

⁶ "Is he well?" Jacob asked.

"Yes," they said, "and here is his daughter Rachel, coming with his sheep."

⁷ Then Jacob said, "Look, it is still broad daylight. It's not time for the animals to be gathered. Water the flock, then go out and let them graze."

⁸ But they replied, "We can't until all the flocks have been gathered and the stone is rolled from the well's opening. Then we will water the sheep."

⁹ While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.¹⁰ As soon as Jacob saw his uncle Laban's daughter Rachel with his sheep,^f he went up and rolled the stone from the opening and watered his uncle Laban's sheep.¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept loudly.¹² He told Rachel that he was

^a28:3 Gn 1:28 ^bGn 48:4 ^c28:4 Gn 12:1–3 ^dGn 12:7; 15:18
^e28:8 Gn 24:3; 26:34–35; 27:46 ^f28:12 Gn 41:1; Nm 12:6; Jb 33:15–16
^gJn 1:51 ^h28:13 Gn 15:7; Ex 6:8 ⁱ28:14 Gn 13:16 ^jGn 12:3
^k28:15 Gn 48:21; Dt 30:3; 1Kg 8:34; Zph 3:20 ^l28:16 Ex 3:4–6;
 Jos 5:13–15; Ps 139:7–12 ^m28:19 Gn 35:6; 48:3; Jdg 1:23, 26
ⁿ28:20 Gn 31:13 ^o28:21 Gn 33:18; Jdg 11:31; 2Sm 15:7–9 ^pDt 26:17
^q28:22 Gn 14:20; Lv 27:30; Dt 14:22 ^r29:1 Nm 23:7; Jdg 6:3

^a28:13 Or *there above it* ^b28:19 = House of God ^c29:1 Lit *Jacob picked up his feet* ^d29:1 Lit *the land of the children of the east* ^e29:3 Sam, some LXX mss read *flocks and the shepherds* ^f29:10 Lit *with the sheep of Laban his mother's brother*
^g29:11 Lit *and he lifted his voice and wept*

her father's relative, Rebekah's son. She ran and told her father.

Jacob Deceived

¹³ When Laban heard the news about his sister's son Jacob, he ran to meet him, hugged him, and kissed him. Then he took him to his house, and Jacob told him all that had happened.

¹⁴ Laban said to him, "Yes, you are my own flesh and blood."^a

After Jacob had stayed with him a month, ¹⁵ Laban said to him, "Just because you're my relative, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be."

¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters: the older was named Leah, and the younger was named Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah had tender eyes, but Rachel was shapely and beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob loved Rachel, so he answered Laban, "I'll work for you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."^b

¹⁹ Laban replied, "Better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay with me."

²⁰ So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, and they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Since my time is complete, give me my wife, so I can sleep with^b her."²² So Laban invited all the men of the place and sponsored a feast. ²³ That evening, Laban took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and he slept with her. ²⁴ And Laban gave his slave Zilpah as his daughter Leah as her slave.

²⁵ When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, "What have you done to me? Wasn't it for Rachel that I worked for you? Why have you deceived me?"

²⁶ Laban answered, "It is not the custom in our country to give the younger daughter in marriage before the firstborn. ²⁷ Complete this week of wedding celebration, and we will also give you this younger one in return for working yet another seven years for me."

²⁸ And Jacob did just that. He finished the week of celebration, and Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. ²⁹ And Laban gave his slave Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her slave. ³⁰ Jacob slept with Rachel also, and indeed, he loved Rachel more

than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.^c

Jacob's Sons

³¹ When the LORD saw that Leah was neglected,^d he opened her womb,^e but Rachel was unable to conceive.^f ³² Leah conceived, gave birth to a son, and named him Reuben,^c for she said, "The LORD has seen my affliction;^g surely my husband will love me now."

³³ She conceived again, gave birth to a son, and said, "The LORD heard that I am neglected and has given me this son also." So she named him Simeon.^d

³⁴ She conceived again, gave birth to a son, and said, "At last, my husband will become attached to me because I have borne three sons for him." Therefore he was named Levi.^e

³⁵ And she conceived again, gave birth to a son, and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah.^{f,h} Then Leah stopped having children.

30 When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she envied her sister. "Give me sons, or I will die!"ⁱ she said to Jacob.

² Jacob became angry with Rachel and said, "Am I in the place of God? He has withheld offspring^g from you!"

³ Then she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah. Go sleep with her, and she'll bear children for me^{h,j} so that through her I too can build a family."⁴ So Rachel gave her slave Bilhah to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her.⁵ Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.⁶ Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; yes, he has heard me and given me a son," so she named him Dan.¹

⁷ Rachel's slave Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.⁸ Rachel said, "In my wrestlings with God,ⁱ I have wrestled with my sister and won," and she named him Naphtali.^k

⁹ When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her slave Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.¹⁰ Leah's slave Zilpah bore Jacob a son.¹¹ Then Leah said, "What good fortune!"^l and she named him Gad.^m

^a29:14 Gn 2:23; 37:27; Jdg 9:2; 2Sm 5:1; 19:12–13; 1Ch 11:1

^b29:18 Gn 30:26; 31:41; Hs 12:12 ^c29:30 Gn 31:41 ^d29:31 Gn 25:28; Dt 21:15–16; 22:13; 24:3; Lk 14:26; 16:13 ^eGn 30:22 ^fGn 11:30; 25:21; Jdg 13:2–3; 1Sm 2:5; Lk 1:36 ^g29:32 Gn 31:42; Ex 3:7; 4:31; Dt 26:7

^h29:35 Gn 49:8; Mt 1:2 ⁱ30:1 1Sm 1:5–6 ^j30:3 Gn 50:23

^a29:14 Lit my bone and my flesh ^b29:21 Lit can go to ^c29:32 = See, a Son; in Hb, the name *Reuben* sounds like "has seen my affliction." ^d29:33 In Hb, the name *Simeon* sounds like "has heard." ^e29:34 In Hb, the name *Levi* sounds like "attached to." ^f29:35 In Hb, the name *Judah* sounds like "praise." ^g30:2 Lit the fruit of the womb ^h30:3 Lit bear on my knees ⁱ30:6 In Hb, the name *Dan* sounds like "has vindicated," or "has judged." ^j30:8 Or "With mighty wrestlings" ^k30:8 In Hb, the name *Naphtali* sounds like "my wrestling." ^l30:11 Alt Hb tradition, LXX, Vg read "Good fortune has come!" ^m30:11 = Good Fortune

¹² When Leah's slave Zilpah bore Jacob a second son, ¹³ Leah said, "I am happy that the women call me happy,"^a so she named him Asher.^a

¹⁴ Reuben went out during the wheat harvest and found some mandrakes in the field.^b When he brought them to his mother Leah, Rachel asked, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

¹⁵ But Leah replied to her, "Isn't it enough that you have taken my husband? Now you also want to take my son's mandrakes?"

"Well then," Rachel said, "he can sleep with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes."

¹⁶ When Jacob came in from the field that evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come with me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So Jacob slept with her that night.

¹⁷ God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Leah said, "God has rewarded me for giving my slave to my husband," and she named him Issachar.^b

¹⁹ Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. ²⁰ "God has given me a good gift," Leah said. "This time my husband will honor me because I have borne six sons for him," and she named him Zebulun.^c ²¹ Later, Leah bore a daughter and named her Dinah.

²² Then God remembered Rachel. He listened to her and opened her womb.^c ²³ She conceived and bore a son, and she said, "God has taken away my disgrace."^d ²⁴ She named him Joseph^d and said, "May the LORD add another son to me."^e

Jacob's Flocks Multiply

²⁵ After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way so that I can return to my homeland. ²⁶ Give me my wives and my children that I have worked for, and let me go.^f You know how hard I have worked for you."

²⁷ But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor with you, stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you."^g ²⁸ Then Laban said, "Name your wages, and I will pay them."^g

²⁹ So Jacob said to him, "You know how I have served you and how your herds have fared with me.^h ³⁰ For you had very little before I came, but now your wealth has increased. The LORD has blessed you because

of me. And now, when will I also do something for my own family?"

³¹ Laban asked, "What should I give you?"

And Jacob said, "You don't need to give me anything. If you do this one thing for me, I will continue to shepherd and keep your flock. ³² Let me go through all your sheep today and remove every sheep that is speckled or spotted, every dark-colored sheep among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the female goats. Such will be my wages. ³³ In the future when you come to check on my wages, my honesty will testify for me. If I have any female goats that are not speckled or spotted, or any lambs that are not black, they will be considered stolen."

³⁴ "Good," said Laban. "Let it be as you have said."

³⁵ That day Laban removed the streaked and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats — every one that had any white on it — and every dark-colored one among the lambs, and he placed his sons in charge of them. ³⁶ He put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob. Jacob, meanwhile, was shepherding the rest of Laban's flock.

³⁷ Jacob then took branches of fresh poplar, almond, and plane wood, and peeled the bark, exposing white stripes on the branches. ³⁸ He set the peeled branches in the troughs in front of the sheep — in the water channels where the sheep came to drink. And the sheep bred when they came to drink. ³⁹ The flocks bred in front of the branches and bore streaked, speckled, and spotted young.ⁱ ⁴⁰ Jacob separated the lambs and made the flocks face the streaked sheep and the completely dark sheep in Laban's flocks. Then he set his own stock apart and didn't put them with Laban's sheep.

⁴¹ Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob placed the branches in the troughs, in full view of the flocks, and they would breed in front of the branches. ⁴² As for the weaklings of the flocks, he did not put out the branches. So it turned out that the weak sheep belonged to Laban and the stronger ones to Jacob. ⁴³ And the man became very rich.^e He had many flocks, female and male slaves, and camels and donkeys.^j

^a30:13 Lk 1:48 ^b30:14 Sg 7:13 ^c30:22 Gn 29:31 ^d30:23 Is 4:1; Lk 1:25
^e30:24 Gn 35:17 ^f30:26 Gn 29:18,20,27; Hs 12:12 ^g30:28 Gn 29:15;
31:7,41 ^h30:29 Gn 31:6,38–40 ⁱ30:39 Gn 31:10–12 ^j30:43 Gn 12:16;
13:2; 24:35; 26:13–14; 30:30

^a30:13 = Happy ^b30:18 In Hb, the name *Issachar* sounds like "reward." ^c30:20 In Hb, the name *Zebulun* sounds like "honored."
^d30:24 = He Adds ^e30:43 Lit *The man spread out very much, very much*

Jacob Separates from Laban

31 Now Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken all that was our father's and has built this wealth from what belonged to our father."² And Jacob saw from Laban's face that his attitude toward him was not the same as before.

³ The LORD said to him, "Go back to the land of your ancestors and to your family, and I will be with you."^a

⁴ Jacob had Rachel and Leah called to the field where his flocks were. ⁵ He said to them, "I can see from your father's face that his attitude toward me is not the same as before, but the God of my father has been with me. ⁶ You know that with all my strength I have served your father^b ⁷ and that he has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God has not let him harm me. ⁸ If he said, 'The spotted sheep will be your wages,' then all the sheep were born spotted. If he said, 'The streaked sheep will be your wages,' then all the sheep were born streaked.^c ⁹ God has taken away your father's herds and given them to me.

¹⁰ "When the flocks were breeding, I saw in a dream that the streaked, spotted, and speckled males were mating with the females. ¹¹ In that dream the angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' and I said, 'Here I am.'¹² And he said, 'Look up and see: all the males that are mating with the flocks are streaked, spotted, and speckled, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.'^d ¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you poured oil on the stone marker and made a solemn vow to me.^e Get up, leave this land, and return to your native land."

¹⁴ Then Rachel and Leah answered him, "Do we have any portion or inheritance in our father's family? ¹⁵ Are we not regarded by him as outsiders? For he has sold us^f and has certainly spent our purchase price. ¹⁶ In fact, all the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So do whatever God has said to you."

¹⁷ So Jacob got up and put his children and wives on the camels. ¹⁸ He took all the livestock and possessions he had acquired in Paddan-aram, and he drove his herds to go to the land of Canaan, to his father Isaac.

¹⁹ When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household idols.^g

²⁰ And Jacob deceived^h Laban the Aramean,

not telling him that he was fleeing. ²¹ He fled with all his possessions, crossed the Euphrates, and headed for^b the hill country of Gilead.

Laban Overtakes Jacob

²² On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. ²³ So he took his relatives with him, pursued Jacob for seven days, and overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁴ But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night. "Watch yourself!" God warned him. "Don't say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."^h

²⁵ When Laban overtook Jacob, Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban and his relatives also pitched their tents in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁶ Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You have deceived me and taken my daughters away like prisoners of war! ²⁷ Why did you secretly flee from me, deceive me, and not tell me? I would have sent you away with joy and singing, with tambourines and lyres, ²⁸ but you didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters. You have acted foolishly. ²⁹ I could do you great harm, but last night the God of your father said to me, 'Watch yourself! Don't say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.'ⁱ ³⁰ Now you have gone off because you long for your father's family — but why have you stolen my gods?"^j

³¹ Jacob answered, "I was afraid, for I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. ³² If you find your gods with anyone here, he will not live! Before our relatives, point out anything that is yours and take it." Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the idols.

³³ So Laban went into Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, and the tents of the two concubines,^c but he found nothing. When he left Leah's tent, he went into Rachel's tent. ³⁴ Now Rachel had taken Laban's household idols, put them in the saddlebag of the camel, and sat on them. Laban searched the whole tent but found nothing.

³⁵ She said to her father, "Don't be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence;^k I am having my period." So Laban searched, but could not find the household idols.

^a31:3 Gn 28:15; 32:10 ^b31:6 Gn 30:29 ^c31:8 Gn 30:32

^d31:12 Gn 30:37–40; Ex 3:7 ^e31:13 Gn 28:18–19 ^f31:15 Gn 29:19–30

^g31:19 Jdg 17:5; 1Sm 15:23; 19:13; Ezk 21:21; Hs 3:4; Zch 10:2

^h31:24 Gn 24:50; 31:29; 2Sm 13:22 ⁱ31:30 Gn 31:19; Jos 24:2; Jdg 18:24

^j31:32 Gn 44:9 ^k31:35 Lv 19:32

^a31:20 Lit And he stole the heart of ^b31:21 Lit and set his face to ^c31:33 Lit servants

Jacob's Covenant with Laban

³⁶ Then Jacob became incensed and brought charges against Laban. "What is my crime?" he said to Laban. "What is my sin, that you have pursued me? ³⁷ You've searched all my possessions! Have you found anything of yours?^a Put it here before my relatives and yours, and let them decide between the two of us. ³⁸ I've been with you these twenty years. Your ewes and female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams from your flock. ³⁹ I did not bring you any of the flock torn by wild beasts; I myself bore the loss. You demanded payment from me for what was stolen by day or by night. ⁴⁰ There I was — the heat consumed me by day and the frost by night, and sleep fled from my eyes. ⁴¹ For twenty years in your household I served you — fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks^b — and you have changed my wages ten times! ⁴² If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, certainly now you would have sent me off empty-handed. But God has seen my affliction and my hard work,^b and he issued his verdict last night."

⁴³ Then Laban answered Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters; the children, my children; and the flocks, my flocks! Everything you see is mine! But what can I do today for these daughters of mine or for the children they have borne? ⁴⁴ Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I.^b Let it be a witness between the two of us."

⁴⁵ So Jacob picked out a stone and set it up as a marker.^c ⁴⁶ Then Jacob said to his relatives, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a mound, then ate there by the mound. ⁴⁷ Laban named the mound Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob named it Galeed.^c

⁴⁸ Then Laban said, "This mound is a witness between you and me today." Therefore the place was called Galeed⁴⁹ and also Mizpah,^{d,d} for he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight. ⁵⁰ If you mistreat my daughters or take other wives, though no one is with us, understand that God will be a witness between you and me."^e ⁵¹ Laban also said to Jacob, "Look at this mound and the marker I have set up between you and me. ⁵² This mound is a witness and the marker is a witness that I will not pass beyond this mound to you, and you will not pass beyond

this mound and this marker to do me harm.

⁵³ The God of Abraham, and the gods^f of Nahor — the gods of their father^e — will judge between us." And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. ⁵⁴ Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his relatives to eat a meal. So they ate a meal and spent the night on the mountain. ⁵⁵ Laban got up early in the morning, kissed his grandchildren and daughters, and blessed them. Then Laban left to return home.

Preparing to Meet Esau

32 Jacob went on his way, and God's angels met him.^g ² When he saw them, Jacob said, "This is God's camp." So he called that place Mahanaim.^{e,h}

³ Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the territory of Edom. ⁴ He commanded them, "You are to say to my lord Esau, 'This is what your servant Jacob says. I have been staying with Laban and have been delayed until now. ⁵ I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female slaves. I have sent this message to inform my lord, in order to seek your favor.'"ⁱ

⁶ When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau; he is coming to meet you — and he has four hundred men with him."^j ⁷ Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; he divided the people with him into two camps, along with the flocks, herds, and camels. ⁸ He thought, "If Esau comes to one camp and attacks it, the remaining one can escape."^k

⁹ Then Jacob said, "God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac,^l the LORD who said to me, 'Go back to your land and to your family, and I will cause you to prosper,'^m ¹⁰ I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. Indeed, I crossed over the Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two camps. ¹¹ Please rescue me from my brother Esau, for I am afraid of him; otherwise, he may come and attack me, the mothers, and their children. ¹² You have said, 'I will cause you to prosper, and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea, too numerous to be counted.'"ⁿ

^a31:37 Gn 29:27,30 ^b31:44 Gn 21:27,32; 26:28 ^c31:45 Jos 24:26–27
^d31:49 Jdg 11:29; 1Sm 7:5–6 ^e31:50 Jdg 11:10; 1Sm 12:5; Jb 16:19; Jr 42:5;
 Mc 1:2 ^f31:53 Jos 24:2 ^g32:1 Ps 91:9–11 ^h32:2 Jos 21:38; 2Sm 2:8;
 17:24,27; 1Kg 2:8 ⁱ32:5 Gn 33:8,15 ^j32:6 Gn 33:1 ^k32:8 Gn 27:41
^l32:9 Gn 28:13; 31:42,53 ^mGn 31:3,13 ⁿ32:12 Gn 28:13–15

^a31:37 Lit *What have you found from all of the possessions of your house?* ^b31:42 Lit *and the work of my hands*
^c31:47 *Jegar-sahadutha* is Aramaic, and *Galeed* is Hb; both names = Mound of Witness ^d31:49 = Watchtower
^e31:53 Two Hb mss, LXX omit *the gods of their father* ^f32:2 = Two Camps



“We could utilize all these strategies and still miss the Lord himself. If that were to happen, our ‘progress’ would be a complete waste.”

¹³ He spent the night there and took part of what he had brought with him as a gift for his brother Esau.^a ¹⁴ two hundred female goats, twenty male goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milk camels with their young, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty female donkeys, and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶ He entrusted them to his slaves as separate herds and said to them, “Go on ahead of me, and leave some distance between the herds.”

¹⁷ And he told the first one, “When my brother Esau meets you and asks, ‘Who do you belong to? Where are you going? And whose animals are these ahead of you?’ ¹⁸ then tell him, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau. And look, he is behind us.’”

¹⁹ He also told the second one, the third, and everyone who was walking behind the animals, “Say the same thing to Esau when you find him. ²⁰ You are also to say, ‘Look, your servant Jacob is right behind us.’” For he thought, “I want to appease Esau with the gift that is going ahead of me. After that, I can face him, and perhaps he will forgive me.”

²¹ So the gift was sent on ahead of him while he remained in the camp that night. ²² During the night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two slave women, and his eleven sons, and crossed the ford of Jabbok.^b ²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, along with all his possessions.

Jacob Wrestles with God

²⁴ Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.^c ²⁵ When the man saw that he could not defeat him, he struck Jacob’s hip socket as they wrestled and dislocated his hip. ²⁶ Then he said to Jacob, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.”

But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

²⁷ “What is your name?” the man asked.

“Jacob,” he replied.

²⁸ “Your name will no longer be Jacob,”^d he said. “It will be Israel^e because you have struggled with God^e and with men and have prevailed.”

²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.”

But he answered, “Why do you ask my name?”^f And he blessed him there.

³⁰ Jacob then named the place Peniel,^g “For I have seen God face to face,” he said, “yet my life has been spared.”^g ³¹ The sun shone on him as he passed by Penuel^h — limping because of his hip. ³² That is why, still today, the Israelites don’t eat the thigh muscle that is at the hip socket: because he struck Jacob’s hip socket at the thigh muscle.^d

Jacob Meets Esau

33 Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming toward him with four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two slave women. ² He put the slaves and their children first, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. ³ He himself went on ahead and bowed to the groundⁱ seven times until he approached his brother.

⁴ But Esau ran to meet him, hugged him, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. Then they wept.^j ⁵ When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he asked, “Who are these with you?”

He answered, “The children God has graciously given your servant.”^k ⁶ Then the slaves and their children approached him and bowed down. ⁷ Leah and her children also approached and bowed down, and then Joseph and Rachel approached and bowed down.

⁸ So Esau said, “What do you mean by this whole procession^l I met?”ⁱ

“To find favor with you, my lord,”^m he answered.

⁹ “I have enough, my brother,” Esau replied. “Keep what you have.”

¹⁰ But Jacob said, “No, please! If I have found favor with you, take this gift from me. For indeed, I have seen your face, and it is like seeing God’s face, since you have accepted me. ¹¹ Please take my present that was brought to you, because God has been gracious to me and I have everything I need.” So Jacob urged him until he accepted.

¹² Then Esau said, “Let’s move on, and I’ll go ahead of you.”

^a32:13 Gn 43:11 ^b32:22 Dt 2:37; 3:16; Jos 12:2 ^c32:24 Hs 12:3–4
^d32:28 Gn 35:10; 2Kg 17:34 ^eHs 12:3–4 ^f32:29 Jdg 13:18
^g32:30 Gn 16:13; Ex 24:10–11; 33:20; Nm 12:8; Jdg 6:22; 13:22
^h32:31 Jdg 8:8 ⁱ33:3 Gn 18:2; 42:6; 43:26 ^j33:4 Gn 45:14
^k33:5 Gn 48:9; Ps 127:3; Is 8:18 ^l33:8 Gn 32:13–16 ^mGn 32:5

^a32:28 In Hb, the name *Israel* sounds like “he struggled (with) God.” ^b32:30 = Face of God ^c32:31 Variant of *Peniel*
^d32:32 Or *tendon* ^e33:8 Lit *camp*

Struggling through Singleness

Help for the Journey

Jayne V. Clark



The “Gift” of Singleness

Have you always wanted to be married? You’ve expressed your desire to family and friends, and they have reassured you, “If you want to be married, it’s obvious you don’t have the gift of singleness.” That sounds logical, but is it true?

Let’s use the same line of reasoning with different circumstances. Say you are married and you’re struggling in your relationship. You long for freedom. Would anyone agree with you if you said, “I must not have the gift of marriage. I need to get a divorce”? Of course not. You would not draw conclusions, take action, or make recommendations based on someone’s desires or struggles instead of on the Word of God. We live in a fallen world where we struggle to bring our desires under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Albert Hsu points out in his book, *Singles at the Crossroads*, that the phrases “gift of singleness” or “gift of celibacy” never appear in the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 7:7 Paul says, “But each has his own gift from God.” Hsu explains that confusion arises when 1 Corinthians 7 is combined with 1 Corinthians 12, leading to the mistaken idea that there is a *spiritual* gift of singleness. In the context of chapter 7, the word “gift” refers to an *objective* gift, such as the gift of eternal life (Rm 6:34).¹ Just as God gives eternal life, so, too, he gives you your marital status.

This stands in contrast to 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul speaks about *spiritual* gifts. These gifts are Spirit-empowered for a particular function. If you have them, God is expecting you to *do* something with them. If you have the gift of prophecy, you prophesy. Do you see how a “spiritual gift” of singleness doesn’t fit? As Hsu notes, there is no such thing as “singling” (except in baseball, of course).

Spiritual gifts are intended to build up the body of Christ. Obviously, single people are meant to strengthen the church too, but not by virtue of being single. Rather, singles do this by exercising their spiritual gifts, just like everyone else. Your singleness isn’t a spiritual gift, but it *is* a gift from God—one he wants you to receive and enjoy with thanksgiving.

Gaining a better understanding of the “gift” of singleness helped me in my struggle with singleness, and so did getting a different perspective on loneliness (see page 1336).

“I’m Not Married, So Something Must Be Wrong with Me”

Well, there *is* something wrong with you: you’re a sinner who needed to be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. But that’s true for married people too.

Sometimes, though, our family and friends offer advice on how to fix it, usually because they care and want to help.

- *Change your appearance.*
- *Work on your personality or temperament.*
- *Consider your location.*
- *Try new activities.*

No strategy guarantees marriage. There are people less attractive than you who are married, and people more attractive than you who are not.

So what does marital status ultimately rest on? God’s sovereignty. God is in control of everything, including whether you are single or married. We make our own choices, but he uses those choices to suit *his* purposes. Psalm 139:16 says, “All my days were written in your book and planned before a single one

of them began." If one of those days is meant to be a wedding day, rest assured it will happen.

You might want to ask family and friends to first pray for your heart, so that you would learn to be content where God has you; to trust in God's goodness and his purposes for you; to be faithful to who he has called you to be today and what he has called you to do in the future; and to be thankful in all things, including your singleness—but most especially, that Jesus has made you right with God.

Helpful Strategies When You're Struggling

It's one thing to gain a new perspective; it can be quite another to deal with all the thoughts and feelings that get stirred up when you're struggling.

Remember that you have an enemy. As a single person free to love and serve the Lord with less distraction, you're a prime target. The devil is going to go after you. Do you remember how he tempted Adam and Eve in the garden? He insinuated that God was holding out on them by withholding knowledge. He cast doubt on God's character.

Do you find yourself tempted, at times, to believe that God is holding out on you because he hasn't given you a spouse? Do you sometimes get distracted from the truth that God is good because the fantasy of marriage, and everything that comes with it, is more alluring? Do you entertain these temptations? Or do you resist the devil so that he will flee from you (Jms 4:7)? Jesus resisted temptation by relying on Scripture (Mt 4:1–11).

Rely on Scripture. Sometimes singles feel invisible because everyone around them is dating or getting married. At other times, they feel this way because the church seems to revolve around families. When that happens, Satan has a field day. He whispers to you, "See, you don't really matter. Marriage is where the action is. No one wants you. No one notices you. God has forgotten you." You can get depressed, angry, resentful, bitter, perhaps even suicidal.

But God has given us his Word to show us that we are not invisible to him. Take Genesis 16. The Lord has promised a son to Abraham (Abram) and Sarah (Sarai). Sarah suggests that her maidservant Hagar sleep with Abraham. Hagar gets pregnant and starts despising Sarah. In response, Sarah mistreats Hagar, and Hagar runs away.

The angel of the Lord comes to Hagar in the desert and speaks with her. In response, Hagar gives God a name: "So she named the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are El-roi,' for she said, 'In this place, have I actually seen the one who sees me?'" (Gn 16:13).

Here's a *slave* woman, a *runaway* slave woman, who has despised Sarah, the recipient of God's blessing. Yet the angel of the Lord not only pursues her and speaks with her but listens to her and is sympathetic toward her. He sees her. If all that is true for a slave woman who had no standing whatsoever, how much truer is it for us as God's precious children? Your name is written on Jesus's hands (Is 49:16). You are never invisible.

Turn to the Lord. When we spend time thinking about these issues, we run the risk of falling into a trap. We can start thinking, *I understand this better now. I'm going to try to live contentedly as a single person. I'm going to read my Bible so I can resist the devil's schemes.* We could utilize all these strategies and still miss the Lord himself. If that were to happen, our "progress" would be a complete waste. The number one course of action is to turn to the Lord and wrestle it out with him.

In Genesis 32, Jacob spends an entire night wrestling with a man (apparently the preincarnate Christ). The man can't overpower Jacob, so he touches the socket of Jacob's hip, injuring him. The man then says, "Let me go." But Jacob says, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." "What is your name?" the man asks. Jacob tells him, but then the man gives Jacob a new name: "Your name will no longer be Jacob . . . It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed" (Gn 32:26–28). "Israel" means "struggles with God." God gave a name meaning "struggles with God" not only to Jacob but to all his descendants—a group that includes all Christians, the Israel of God (Gl 6:16).

Think too about Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before his crucifixion (Mt 26:36–44). Jesus was wrestling with God, but each time, he surrendered himself saying, “I want your will, not mine.” Ultimately, he preferred his Father’s desires for him over his own desires for himself.

As Christians, we enjoy the benefits of Jesus’s accomplishments, including the fact that when we’re struggling with God about our singleness, his Spirit is struggling on our behalf and praying for us (Rm 8:26). It’s not a matter of our following his example based on our own ability to do so. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us (Eph 1:19–20).

We have direct access to God because of what Jesus did, so take your fears, your worries, your hopes, your disappointment, your longing, your tears, your questions, your doubts—all of it—to Jesus and wrestle it through with him, trusting that he’s in it with you and that he’s for you.

It may help to take a passage such as Psalm 13:1—“How long, LORD? . . . How long will you hide your face from me?”—to express what you’re feeling. David’s circumstances hadn’t changed by the end of that psalm, but he was able to say, “But I have trusted in your faithful love; my heart will rejoice in your deliverance. I will sing to the LORD because he has treated me generously” (Ps 13:5–6). Like Jacob, you may start out wrestling but in the end find yourself clinging to the one who will never let you go.

Seek First God’s Kingdom

Jesus tells us to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you” (Mt 6:33). God wants you to join with him in building his kingdom. He wants you to reach out to a hurting world in his name, loving those he brings across your path.

He wants you, as a single person, to use your spiritual gifts well. You can only do this by faith, trusting that Jesus knows exactly what you need and that he is committed to supplying it. God gave his own dear Son for you. Having done that, you can be assured that he will not hold back anything you truly need (Rm 8:32). So, in gratitude to him, use the freedom you enjoy as a single person to love others in his name.

Now there is a gold ring on my finger, only it’s not a wedding band. It’s one some dear friends had made for me based on an idea I shared. It has a diamond that reminds me of Jesus’s surpassing beauty, and two jewels to remind me of the Bible reference inscribed inside—Proverbs 3:13–18:

Happy is a man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding,
for she is more profitable than silver, and her revenue is better than
gold.

She is more precious than jewels; nothing you desire can equal her.
Long life is in her right hand; in her left, riches and honor.
Her ways are pleasant, and all her paths, peaceful.

She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, and those who hold
on to her are happy.

That ring serves as a visual reminder of the one who is wisdom himself. He is more precious to me than anyone, and it encourages me to wrestle through my questions with him. It reminds me that even if I’m single, in Christ Jesus I am never alone.

*Adapted from “Struggling Through Singleness: Help for the Journey” by Jayne V. Clark (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2020).

See endnotes page 1800.