

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

NIV

Celebrate
Recovery[®]
Study Bible

GENERAL EDITOR

JOHN BAKER

FOREWORD BY RICK WARREN

LARGE PRINT

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

NIV
Celebrate
Recovery[®]
Study Bible

ZONDERVAN[®]

NIV Celebrate Recovery Study Bible
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NEW TESTAMENT

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ABOUT THE *CELEBRATE* *RECOVERY STUDY BIBLE*

God's Word offers a way out for those of us who struggle with life's circumstances or with addictive, dysfunctional or compulsive behaviors. The *Celebrate Recovery Study Bible* provides special features highlighting aspects of Scripture that speak directly to our need to break free from life's hurts, hang-ups and habits. This makes the *Celebrate Recovery Study Bible* a powerful, positive ally to which you'll turn again and again.

Contrary to a common misperception, God's Good News is positive, not negative. It's all about redemption, not condemnation. This Bible will lift you up and show you how to walk, step by attainable step, on a path of healing and liberty from the hurts, hang-ups and habits that have been holding you back.

The *Celebrate Recovery Study Bible* is based on the eight principles and the underlying twelve Christ-centered recovery steps of the proven Celebrate Recovery program (see pages 15–44). While this Bible has been designed as a perfect companion to the program (which is now offered in thousands of churches worldwide), it has also been intentionally designed to help anyone who is struggling with their hurts, hang-ups and habits.

Features

The Eight Principles and Twelve Christ-Centered Steps of the Celebrate Recovery Program

Accustomed to a traditional twelve-step program and hesitant to make a switch? The good news is that the familiar twelve steps remain intact under the Celebrate

Recovery model, except that the vague language about a Higher Power gets specific, focusing in on the *one* and *only true* Higher Power, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Celebrate Recovery is built on the eight proven Biblical principles based on the well-loved Beatitudes from Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount (see page 15). The Christ-centered twelve steps fit neatly and naturally underneath the umbrella of the eight principles, as outlined on pages 17–44. Once you become familiar with this framework, you'll grow to love and appreciate your new perspective on the recovery process.

Book Introductions

Before launching into each of the Bible's books, you will have a bird's-eye view of its theme, author and date. These brief introductions include key verses related to recovery, as well as a brief overview of recovery themes in the book. That's right: All 66 books touch on recovery issues. And each one reflects a God who cares deeply about each person struggling to make sense of a fallen world.

Character Studies

Get to know more than 50 Bible characters, each of whom illustrates a particular recovery issue. You'll be amazed at how these ancient personalities jump into focus when you view them simply as people who were in many ways very much like us.

Recovery Stories

One of the most engaging features of this Bible, these real-life, two-page stories

document the backgrounds, struggles and ultimate victories of over 50 men and women whose lives have been permanently changed through working the principles and steps of Celebrate Recovery. Each testimony relates to one of the above character studies. They show that the struggles we face today have been common for thousands of years.

Lesson Studies

Each of the eight principles is tied to one or more key words that serve as memory aids. For example, a key word in Principle One is DENIAL; in Principle Four, CONFESS; and in Principle Eight, GIVE. Each letter in these acrostics begins a sentence or phrase that is discussed at the point of an applicable verse in the Bible. The “path” is clearly marked, making your journey through each principle clear-cut and uncomplicated.

Recovery-Related Scripture Ties

Recovery themes are addressed frequently throughout Scripture. Just look for the line in the margin running alongside the passage, as well as for the number or numbers indicating which principles the verses relate to. The numbered principles can be found on page 15.

Daily Devotionals

The 30 days of devotions are designed to be read and reread for reinforcement and encouragement. Celebrate Recovery is not just a program but a means toward real life change, and the key to recovery is to keep the principles alive. These thirty devotions begin on page 1617. As you read through them, then read them again, they will assist you in reviewing the principles as often as you’d like. “Take a Look” questions at the

end of each devotion offer you an opportunity to evaluate your situation each time you return to the devotion and its related principle.

Subject Index

The Subject Index begins on page 1604, and will lead you to key texts on a variety of subjects covered in God’s Word. A sampling from the beginning of the list includes *abandonment, abuse, addiction, adultery, alcohol use, ambition, anger and anxiety.*

Features Topical Index

This second subject index, beginning on page 1597, refers you to particular features in this Bible that touch on recovery themes. For example, if your concern is anorexia, you’ll find the page numbers of all features that touch on this issue.

Character Study and Recovery Stories Index

Would you like to work your way through all of the Biblical character sketches or the recovery stories? Find the details on page 1595.

Wherever people long for a way out ... wherever broken hearts need hope ... this Bible’s features offer help and encouragement through every stage of the recovery process.

Celebrate Recovery is a spiritual maturity program. If everybody daily lived Principles Seven and Eight to the best of their ability, this world would be a much better place to live.

John Baker
Founder and Pastor of Celebrate Recovery
Saddleback Church

CELEBRATE RECOVERY: A BRIEF HISTORY

The purpose of Saddleback Church's Celebrate Recovery ministry is to fellowship with others and to celebrate God's healing power in our lives through the program's Eight Recovery Principles. This experience allows those who work through the program to experience profound life change and freedom from their hurts, hang-ups and habits. By working and applying these Biblical principles, we begin to grow spiritually. We become free from our addictive, compulsive and dysfunctional behaviors. This freedom creates peace, serenity, joy and — most importantly — a stronger personal relationship with God and with others. As we progress through the program we discover our personal, loving and forgiving Higher Power — Jesus Christ, the one and only true Higher Power.

Pastor John Baker
Founder, Celebrate Recovery

Hi, I'm John Baker, a believer who struggles with alcohol. I have had the honor to lead a program and movement called Celebrate Recovery. In these next few paragraphs, I'd like to give you a brief history of the origins of this program, on which this Bible is based. In order to do this, I have to start with my own testimony.

As I said above, I am in recovery from abuse of alcohol. This sin-addiction had its roots in my own struggle with self-esteem issues in my earliest years — this despite being a good student and athlete.

But even though I was a popular young man on the high school campus and ball field, I still had this overwhelming sense of inadequacy. Even though I had been raised in a Christian home and had early on felt the call to the ministry, I never felt that I would be good enough to be used in God's service.

As a young man I enrolled in the University of Missouri. It was there that I made a new discovery: Using alcohol gave me the self-confidence I had been lacking. As my college career progressed, my use of alcohol increased. My life was now complete: the party never started until I arrived, and it ended when I left. Alcohol gave me a new sense of power and confidence — one I had been looking for for most of my life.

I met and married my wife Cheryl while we were still in college. She was attracted to my outgoing personality that I had manufactured. As we made a new life together, my use of alcohol continued. It followed me into the Air Force. Into the business world. It worked its way into all aspects of my daily life, became an integral part of who I was and what I did. But I never thought it was a problem — I thought it was a tool that I was using to get me to where I wanted to go.

Through all of these years I looked like the model of a successful man. I had a beautiful wife, two great kids — Laura and John Jr. — and a nice house in the suburbs. I was a leader in my church's youth group. And I was climbing the corporate ladder as well. I was promoted eight times in the first eleven years of my business career. By the

age of 30 I had reached all of my life's career and financial goals.

But all the while I kept replaying the words of a song in my mind — “Is That All There Is?”

With all the business success came several relocations, and attending church became less and less important to me as my drinking increased. I knew that if I died I was saved; however, I also was beginning to be uncomfortable with my lifestyle, business practices and priorities. To the outside world everything with our family seemed normal, but in my heart I knew something was very wrong. I had to face a major decision: I could do it my way — continue drinking and living by the world's standards — or surrender and repent and do it God's way.

I wish I could tell you that I saw the light and did it God's way. But the truth is, I chose my way. My drinking increased, and I turned my back completely on God.

I was what is known as a functioning alcoholic. I knew I had a problem, but I had never lost a job or been arrested for drunk driving. Up to this point my secret was still safe. Cheryl was in denial, or so I thought. She never labeled me as an “alcoholic” until one day she noticed my new breakfast drink of choice: beer. Over time tensions rose, and one evening over a seemingly minor argument, she asked me to go to counseling with her or to just leave. Much to her surprise, I left, and our 13 month separation began.

You see, the only things my hurts, hang-ups and habits cost me were my closest and most important relationships: with my Lord and my family. What I had considered the solution for my life's problem — alcohol — had become the problem of my life. Eventually my drinking cost me all purpose and reason for living. I was dying physically, emotionally, mentally and, most importantly, spiritually.

Finally convinced my life had to change, I began to attend AA meetings without Cheryl's knowledge. On February 14, 1991, she and I met for lunch. At that meal I told her that I had begun to work on my recovery. I made my amends and she forgave me. After that meeting our relationship began to improve. We were still separated, but we began to see each other more often, and my relationship with my kids improved as well.

Cheryl and the kids had begun attending a church that met in a high school gym: A church called Saddleback. One Saturday night I was visiting the kids and they asked me to go to church with them on Sunday morning. Much to their surprise, I said yes. I hadn't been in a church for five years!

That Sunday morning, I heard the music and Pastor Rick Warren's message and I knew I was home. Cheryl and I began in earnest to work on our issues that had torn our relationship apart. Five months later, God opened our hearts and we renewed our marriage vows. As a family, we were baptized and became a part of the church community.

All I can say is that this is evidence of the power and grace of God in my life. It was in the context of this community that I found one of my life's verses — 1 Peter 2:9 – 10.

You know, God never wastes a hurt. All the pain and heartache of my sin — my addiction — finally made sense. However, at my AA meetings I was mocked when I talked about my Higher Power — the only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ. And at church I couldn't find a place where individuals would openly relate to my struggle with alcoholism. The men's small groups I tried just didn't want to go that deep with their issues.

But I knew they were there. In a church of thousands of people, I couldn't be the only one struggling with a hurt, hang-up

or addictive habit. I wrote Pastor Rick a concise, 13-page, single-spaced letter outlining the vision that God gave me — the vision of Celebrate Recovery, a Christ-centered recovery program. His response? “Great — do it!” Cheryl and I accepted that challenge, and after much prayer and hard work, the Celebrate Recovery program was born.

Over the past 16 years, through the grace and oversight of God, the ministry of Celebrate Recovery has expanded. The program has been worked by tens of thousands of individuals in thousands of churches around the world. The Celebrate Recovery team has developed a youth edition of the curriculum. We have launched Celebrate Recovery–Inside, a program that works with prison inmates — a segment of the population where addiction also runs high.

God has blessed this program, and through it has brought profound life-change to thousands of people who have

struggled for years with their particular hurts, hang-ups and habits. Make no mistake about it, God is in the business of changing the lives of those who admit their powerlessness to control their hurts, hang-ups and habits and turn their lives and will over to him.

If you want more information on Celebrate Recovery or need to find a group near you contact www.celebraterecovery.com.

This Bible has been designed to accompany the Celebrate Recovery curriculum and program in the church setting. But it also has been designed to be used by individuals who are not yet a part of the Celebrate Recovery program.

As you begin or continue your process of working the principles and steps on the road to recovery, may you find blessing, comfort and assurance in the pages of this Bible.

John Baker
June 2007

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

BASED ON THE BEATITUDES

PASTOR RICK WARREN

Principle One: Realize I'm not God; I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable (Step One).

"Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Matthew 5:3)

Principle Two: Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to him and that he has the power to help me recover (Step Two).

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

Principle Three: Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control (Step Three).

"Blessed are the meek." (Matthew 5:5)

Principle Four: Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God and to someone I trust (Steps Four and Five).

"Blessed are the pure in heart." (Matthew 5:8)

Principle Five: Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask him to remove my character defects (Steps Six and Seven).

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." (Matthew 5:6)

Principle Six: Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others (Steps Eight and Nine).

"Blessed are the merciful." (Matthew 5:7)

"Blessed are the peacemakers." (Matthew 5:9)

Principle Seven: Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading and prayer in order to know God and his will for my life and to gain the power to follow his will (Steps Ten and Eleven).

Principle Eight: Yield myself to God to be used to bring this good news to others, both by my example and by my words (Step Twelve).

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness." (Matthew 5:10)

PRINCIPLE ONE

REALIZE I'M NOT GOD; I ADMIT THAT I AM POWERLESS
TO CONTROL MY TENDENCY TO DO THE WRONG THING
AND THAT MY LIFE IS UNMANAGEABLE.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

MATTHEW 5:3

Our amazing recovery journey starts with Principle One, where we admit that we are powerless to control our hurts, hang-ups and habits and that our lives have become unmanageable, out of control. But before we begin this exciting journey, we need to ask ourselves the following two questions:

ARE WE WEARING A MASK OF DENIAL?
OVER WHAT DO WE REALLY HAVE CONTROL?

Let's look at the first question: Are we wearing a mask of denial? Before we can make any progress in our recovery, we need to face our denial. As soon as we remove our mask, our recovery begins — or begins again! It doesn't matter whether we're new in recovery or we've been in the process and working the principles and steps for years. Denial can rear its ugly head and return at any time. We may trade addictions or get into a new relationship that's unhealthy for us in a different way than a previous one.

God says in Jeremiah 6:14:

*They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious.
'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace.*

Denial is serious. We can't heal our wounds, hurts, hang-ups and habits by pretending they're not there. Following are six negative effects DENIAL has had on our lives:

- D**isables our feelings — 2 Peter 2:19
- E**nergy drain — Psalm 146:7–8
- N**egates our growth — Psalm 107:13–14
- I**solates us from God — Genesis 3:7–8
- A**lienates us from other human relationships — Ephesians 4:25
- L**engthens our pain — Jeremiah 30:17

As soon as we start working on this principle and admit that we're powerless, we begin to change. We see that our old ways of trying to control our hurts, hang-ups and habits didn't work. Our attempts were buried by our denial, and our problems were held close by our false sense of power. This leads us to the second question we need to answer:

Over what do we really have control? In Principle One we recognize our need to admit our powerlessness. Our lust for the power to control is rooted in our weaknesses, not in our strengths. We need to realize our human weaknesses and turn our lives over to God. Jesus knew this would be difficult. How difficult? He said this about a related issue, but it applies here as well: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

The following acrostic demonstrates what happens when we admit we're POWERLESS. We begin to let go of the following "serenity robbers":

Pride — Proverbs 29:23
Only ifs — Luke 12:2 – 3
Worrying — Matthew 6:34
Escape — Ephesians 5:13 – 14
Resentment — Ephesians 4:26 – 27
Loneliness — Hebrews 13:1 – 2
Empiness — John 10:10
Selfishness — Luke 17:33
Separation — Romans 8:38 – 39

The power to change comes only from God's grace. In Principle One we start working and living this program in earnest. When we admit we're powerless, we go on to recognize that we need a power greater than ourselves to restore us. That power is the one and only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12:1 invites us, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

This verse spells out two important insights as we begin our recovery journey. First, God has a particular race, a unique plan, for each of us — a plan for good, not a life consumed with dependencies, addictions and obsessions. The second thing is that we need to be willing to get rid of all the unnecessary baggage — our hurts, hang-ups and habits — in our lives that keep us stuck ("let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles"). Working through the eight principles will allow us to discover God's plan and purpose for our lives. The journey begins by taking the first step.

The first step of the Christ-centered twelve steps relates to Principle One.

STEP ONE: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

*I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.
For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

ROMANS 7:18

PRINCIPLE ONE PRAYER

Dear God, your Word tells me that I can't heal my hurts, hang-ups and habits just by saying they're not there. Help me! Parts of my life — or all of my life — are out of control. I now know that I can't "fix" myself. It seems that the harder I try to do the right thing, the more I struggle. Lord, I want to step out of my denial into the truth. I pray for you to show me the way. In your Son's name, Amen.

PRINCIPLE ONE LESSONS:

DENIAL: Go to 2 Peter 2:19 (p. 1554).

POWERLESS: Go to Proverbs 29:23 (p. 777).

PRINCIPLE TWO

EARNESTLY BELIEVE THAT GOD EXISTS,
THAT I MATTER TO HIM AND THAT HE HAS
THE POWER TO HELP ME RECOVER.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

MATTHEW 5:4

In Principle Two we find the power for our recoveries as we earnestly believe that God exists, that we matter to him and that he has the power to help us recover.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us:

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

And Psalm 62:5 invites:

Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.

In the first principle we admitted that we're powerless. It's through this admission that we're able to *believe* and *receive* God's power to help us recover. We do need to be careful, though, not to cover up the pit of our hurts, hang-ups and habits with layers of denial or to try some quick "fix." Instead, we need to expose our hurts, hang-ups and habits to the light so that through God's power we can truly find healing.

In the second principle we come to believe that God exists, that we're important to him and that we're able to find the one true Higher Power, Jesus Christ. We've come to understand that God wants to fill our lives with his love, joy and presence.

In Luke 15:11 – 32 we find the parable of the lost son. This story about a father's love for his wayward son is really a picture of the love of God the Father for all of us. God's love is looking for us, no matter how lost we may feel. God's searching love can find us, no matter how many times we may have fallen into sin. God's hands of mercy are reaching out to pick us up, to love us and to forgive us.

This is the only place where we'll find hope. For that reason Principle Two is called the hope principle.

This is what the word HOPE means in Principle Two:

- H** igher Power — Romans 11:36
- O** penness to change — Ephesians 4:22 – 23
- P** ower to change — Psalm 25:5
- E** xpectation to change — Philippians 1:6

The second step of the Christ-centered 12 steps relates to Principle Two.

STEP TWO: We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

*It is God who works in you to will and to act
in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:13

In this principle we come to believe that a power greater than ourselves can help us recover — can restore us to sanity. This isn't to say we're crazy. The word sanity in this context means that, as a result of admitting our powerlessness in Principle One, we can move from chaos into hope in Principle Two. Hope comes when we believe that a power greater than ourselves, our Higher Power, Jesus Christ, can and will restore us. Jesus alone can provide that power, since we on our own are powerless over our hurts, hang-ups and habits. He alone can restore order and meaning to our lives. He alone can restore us to sanity.

A working definition of *insanity* in this context might be doing the same thing over and over again but expecting a different result each time.

Sanity, using this model, may, on the other hand, be defined as “wholeness of mind; making decisions based on the truth.”

Jesus is the only Higher Power who offers the truth, as well as the power, the way and the life.

The following are just some of the gifts we receive when we come to believe that our true Higher Power, Jesus Christ, has both the power and the will to restore us to SANITY:

- S** trength — Psalm 46:1
- A** cceptance — Romans 15:7
- N** ew life — 2 Corinthians 1:8 – 9
- I** ntegrity — 3 John 4
- T** rust — Proverbs 29:25
- Y** our Higher Power — Romans 5:8

We can't follow through with anything unless and until we get started. But just how much faith do we need to start working this principle? Jesus provides the answer in Matthew 17:20: “Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

It's reassuring to know that we don't need large doses of faith as we begin the recovery process. We need only a little faith, as small as the tiniest of seeds, to effect change, to begin to move away our mountains of hurts, hang-ups and habits.

Eternal life doesn't begin with death; it begins with faith. Hebrews 11:1 explains what faith is: "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." We can't find salvation through intellectual understanding, monetary gifts, good works or church attendance. The way — the only way — to find salvation is described in Romans 10:9: "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

We'll find our true hope in the only Higher Power, Jesus Christ. As we take this step of hope, his Spirit will come with supernatural power to reside in our hearts. The Holy Spirit will give us the courage to reach out and take hold of Christ's hand, to face the present with confidence and the future with realistic expectancy.

Simply put, life without Christ is a hopeless end; with him life is an endless hope.

PRINCIPLE TWO PRAYER

Dear God, I've tried hard to fix and control my life's hurts, hang-ups and habits. I admit that, by myself, I'm powerless to change. I need to begin to believe and receive your power to help me recover. You loved me enough to send your Son to the cross to die for my sins. Help me to open myself up to the hope I can find only in Jesus. Please help me to start living my life in reliance upon this hope, one day at a time. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

PRINCIPLE TWO LESSONS:

HOPE: Go to Romans 11:36 (p. 1407).

SANITY: Go to Psalm 46:1 (p. 664).

PRINCIPLE THREE

CONSCIOUSLY CHOOSE TO COMMIT ALL MY LIFE AND WILL TO CHRIST'S CARE AND CONTROL.



Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

MATTHEW 5:5

In Principle Three we make the one-time, permanent decision to turn over our lives to the care of God — the most important decision we'll ever make. Our choice, not chance, determines our destiny. And that decision requires only putting our faith into action.

But what is faith? It isn't a sense, sight or reason. Faith is simply taking God at his word. God's Word tells us in Romans 10:9 that "if you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." For some people that seems just too simple. But it isn't. Our salvation depends much more on God's love for us than on our love for him.

How do we TURN over our lives and wills to our Higher Power, Jesus Christ? This principle ends with new life, but we must take three actions before that new life can be ours:

- T**rust — Romans 10:9
- U**nderstand — Proverbs 3:5–6
- R**epent — Ezekiel 18:30–32
- N**ew life — 2 Corinthians 5:17

Many people don't understand that putting off the decision to accept Jesus Christ as their Higher Power, as their Lord and Savior, is really deciding not to accept him. Principle Three is like opening the door: All you need is the willingness to make the decision. Christ will do the rest. He calls out to us, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me" (Revelation 3:20).

If we're going to successfully work Principle Three, we need to get past our old, familiar, negative barriers of pride, fear, guilt, worry and doubt. But how do we break this cycle? The answer is that we need to be proactive, to take the initiative. In fact, Principle Three is all

about action. Listen again to the opening words: “Consciously choose to commit . . .” Making that choice requires ACTION:

- A** ccept — Romans 10:9
- C** ommit — Psalm 143:10
- T** urn it over — Proverbs 3:6
- I** t’s only the beginning — Philippians 1:6
- O** ne day at a time — Matthew 6:34
- N** ext step — 1 Corinthians 15:2–4

Turning over our lives to Christ is a one-time, yet permanent, commitment. Once we accept Christ as Lord of our life, it’s a done deal. We can’t lose our salvation. It comes with a lifetime (in this case, eternal) guarantee from the Holy Spirit: “You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 1:13).

The rest of the principle, though — the part about turning over our wills to Christ — requires a daily recommitment. We can begin by going to our Bible regularly, opening it prayerfully, reading it expectantly and living it joyfully.

The third step of the Christ-centered 12 steps relates to Principle Three.

STEP THREE: We made a decision to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God.

*I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God —
this is your true and proper worship.*

ROMANS 12:1

Principle Three states that we choose to commit our lives and wills to Christ’s care. In the secular 12 steps, Step Three gets the sequence confused, telling us to “turn our wills and our lives over . . .” The fact is that we must first commit and surrender our lives to the one and only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ. Then and only then are we empowered to turn over our wills to him.

Principle Three constitutes the core difference between a secular 12-step program and Celebrate Recovery. True and lasting recovery can be achieved only through a personal, committed relationship with Christ.

In the secular 12 steps, Step Three is: “We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God, as we understand him.”

We need a God much, much greater than anything that stems from our own imagination or understanding. We need the one true God, the Almighty, the Creator of the universe. First Corinthians 13:12 tells us, “Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” Someday we’ll see Jesus face-to-face. The fog of interpretation will be lifted, and our understanding will be perfected.

Praise God that we don't need a complete understanding of Jesus in order to ask him into our lives as Lord and Savior. Why? Because God does more than lead us day by day and year by year. He directs our way moment by moment, one step after another.

If you haven't asked Jesus Christ to be your Higher Power, the Lord and Savior of your life, what are you waiting for? All it takes is praying this prayer with a sincere heart:

PRINCIPLE THREE PRAYER

Dear God, I've tried — and failed — to do it all by myself in my own power. Today I want to turn my life over to you. I ask you to be my Lord and Savior. You're the one and only Higher Power. I ask you to help me think less about myself and my own will. I want to turn over my will, moment by moment, to you, to continuously seek your direction and wisdom for my life. Please continue to help me overcome my hurts, hang-ups and habits, so that victory over them may help others as they see your power at work in my already changed, and still changing, life. Help me to do your will always. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

PRINCIPLE THREE LESSONS:

TURN: Go to Romans 10:9 (p. 1404).

ACTION: Go also to Romans 10:9 (p. 1405).

PRINCIPLE FOUR

OPENLY EXAMINE AND CONFESS MY FAULTS TO MYSELF, TO GOD AND TO SOMEONE I TRUST.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

MATTHEW 5:8

Principle Four begins the process of “coming clean.” It’s here that we openly examine and confess our faults to ourselves, to God and to another person we trust. We begin to chip away at the “truth decay” of our past. The negative effects of our hurts, hang-ups and habits have built up, like a layer of tartar, over the years and have kept us from really seeing the truth about our past and present situations.

In the first part of this principle, we need to “openly examine” our faults. We need to list, or inventory, all of the significant events — both good and bad — in our lives. We need to be as honest as we can in order to allow God to show us our part in each event and how that has affected both ourselves and others. We need to do a searching and fearless inventory, to step out of our denial, because we can’t put our faults behind us until we’ve faced them. We need to see through our denial of the past into the truth of the present — to identify our true feelings, motives and thoughts.

Our inventory brings us to a black-and-white discovery of who we really are at our core. But if we look only at the bad parts of our past, we distort our inventory and open ourselves up to unnecessary pain. Lamentations 3:40 invites us, “Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.” Notice that the verse doesn’t say, “Examine your bad, negative ways.” We need to honestly focus on both the positives and the negatives of our past.

We accomplish that by taking a MORAL inventory. That word *moral* scares some people. But at its root, it simply means “honest.” To make a MORAL inventory, we need to do the following five things:

- M**ake time — Job 33:33
- O**pen ourselves up — Job 7:11
- R**ely on God — Isaiah 40:29
- A**nalyze our past honestly — Proverbs 20:27
- L**ist — Lamentations 3:40

In this principle, we list the people we resent or fear, the specific actions others have taken to hurt us, the ways in which those hurtful actions have affected our lives and the wrongs or injuries we've inflicted on others.

This is done by taking a Spiritual Inventory. Through this process, we examine eight key areas of our lives:

Our relationships with others — Matthew 6:12 – 14

Our priorities in life — Matthew 6:33

Our attitude — Ephesians 4:31

Our integrity — Colossians 3:9

Our mind — Romans 12:2

Our body — 1 Corinthians 6:19 – 20

Our family — Joshua 24:15

Our church — Hebrews 10:25

The fourth step of the Christ-centered 12 steps relates to the first part of Principle Four.

STEP FOUR: We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

*Let us examine our ways and test them,
and let us return to the LORD.*

LAMENTATIONS 3:40

As soon as we complete our inventories in the first part of Principle Four, we need to confess our faults to ourselves, to God and to someone else we trust. After we share our inventories — the good and bad things of our past and present — we'll find the peace and freedom for which we may have been searching our entire lives. We need to confess our shortcomings, resentments and sins. God wants us to come clean, to admit that wrong is wrong, that we're "guilty as charged." We need to CONFESS the specific sins we've discovered in our inventory:

Confess our shortcomings, resentments and sins — Proverbs 28:13

Obey God's direction — Romans 14:11 – 12

No more guilt — Romans 8:1

Face the truth — John 8:12

Ease the pain — Psalm 32:3 – 5

Stop the blame — Matthew 7:3

Start accepting God's forgiveness — 2 Corinthians 5:19

In confession we agree with God regarding our sins, and our fellowship with him is restored. Principle Four sums up how we go about obeying God's direction in confessing our sins: First, we confessed our sins to God so we could be forgiven. Then we confessed them to another person we trust so we could start the healing process.

The fifth step of the Christ-centered 12 steps relates to this part of Principle Four.

STEP FIVE: We admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray
for each other so that you may be healed.*

JAMES 5:16

Some people feel that if they ADMIT their sins to another they have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Following is the truth about four things we have to lose and three things we have to gain by sharing our inventories with someone we trust:

We lose:

1. Our sense of isolation. Our feeling of aloneness will begin to vanish.
2. Our unwillingness to forgive. When people accept and forgive us, we start to see that we, in turn, can forgive others.
3. Our inflated, false pride. As we realistically see and accept ourselves, we begin to gain true humility, which involves seeing ourselves as we really are and God as he really is.
4. Our sense of denial. Being truthful with another person begins to tear away at our denial. We begin to feel clean and honest.

We gain:

1. Healing that the Bible promises. Look again at James 5:16. The key word here is “healed.” Notice that the verse doesn’t say, “Confess your sins to one another and you will be forgiven,” although we hope this will be so, at least in terms of the other person. God already forgave us when we confessed our sins to him. Now he promises that we’ll begin the healing process when we confess our sins to someone else.
2. Freedom. Our secrets have kept us in chains — bound, frozen, unable to move forward in any of our relationships, either with God or with others. Admitting our sins snaps the chains so God’s healing power can be released.
3. Support. When we share our inventory with another person, we gain support. Our partner can help us stay focused and provide valuable feedback.

An important part of Celebrate Recovery is for each of us to have accountability relationships. Don’t attempt to work through this fourth principle alone. We need sponsors and/or accountability partners for the following three reasons:

1. Having someone fill this role for us is a key part of our recovery program.

By walking alongside us on the road to recovery, a sponsor and/or an accountability partner keeps us on track as we complete the eight principles.

Proverbs 20:5 says:

*The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters,
but one who has insight draws them out.*

We need a man or woman who understands both us as an individual and what we're going through in order to help us in our recovery.

2. Having a sponsor and/or an accountability partner is Biblical.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 – 10 tells us:

*Two are better than one, because they have a good return
for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.*

And Proverbs 27:17 points out that, "as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." The phrase "one another" is used in the New Testament over 50 times.

3. Having a sponsor and/or an accountability partner is the best guard against relapse.

By providing feedback to keep us on track, a sponsor and/or an accountability partner can see our old dysfunctional, self-defeating patterns beginning to resurface and quickly point them out to us. This person can confront us in a spirit of truth and love without piling on shame or guilt.

Ecclesiastes 7:5 states:

*It is better to heed the rebuke of a wise person
than to listen to the song of fools.*

The trouble with most of us is that we'd rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism.

As we complete Principle Four, we need to remember that no matter how bad our past actions may have been, we can hold on to the assurance offered by Romans 8:1: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Principle Four can be summed up in one verse, Isaiah 1:18:

*"Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD.
"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."*

PRINCIPLE FOUR PRAYER

Dear God, you know my past; you're familiar with all the good and bad things I've done. In this principle, I ask you to give me the strength and courage to list them so I can "come clean" and face both my past and the truth about my present and future. Please help me reach out to those special persons you've placed along my road to recovery. Thank you for providing them to help me maintain balance as I work on my inventory. In Christ's name I pray, Amen.

PRINCIPLE FOUR LESSONS:

MORAL: Go to Job 33:33 (p. 621).

SPONSOR: Go to Ecclesiastes 4:9 – 12 (p. 786).

INVENTORY: Go to Ephesians 4:31 (p. 1469).

SPIRITUAL INVENTORY: Go to Matthew 6:12 – 13 (p. 1133).

CONFESS: Go to Proverbs 28:13 (p. 775).

ADMIT: Go to James 5:16 (p. 1543).

PRINCIPLE FIVE

VOLUNTARILY SUBMIT TO EVERY CHANGE GOD
WANTS TO MAKE IN MY LIFE AND HUMBLY ASK HIM
TO REMOVE MY CHARACTER DEFECTS.

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

MATTHEW 5:6

By the time we get to Principle Five, we've already taken some major steps on the road to recovery. We admitted we had a problem we were powerless within ourselves to overcome. We came to believe that God could and would help us. We sought him and turned our lives and wills over to his care and direction. We took a spiritual inventory and shared it both with God and with another person. That was a lot of work—hard work, great work! Now we're going to ask God to remove our character defects.

Principle Five states that each of us is ready to voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in our lives.

The sixth and seventh steps of the Christ-centered 12 steps relate to Principle Five.

STEP SIX: We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

JAMES 4:10

STEP SEVEN: We humbly asked him to remove all our shortcomings.

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us
our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

1 JOHN 1:9

Most, if not all, of us would be more than willing to have *certain* character defects go away. The sooner the better, we think. Good riddance! But the truth is that some defects are hard to give up. Like weeds in a garden, they've developed deep roots. We've developed our defects of character, our hang-ups and our destructive habits over periods of five, ten, twenty or more years. In this principle we and God— together — are going after these defects. *All* of them.

What does it mean to be entirely READY?

- R**elease control — Psalm 143:10
- E**asy does it — Psalm 37:5–6
- A**ccept the change — 1 Peter 1:13–14
- D**o replace our character defects — Matthew 12:43–45
- Y**ield to the growth — 1 John 3:9

To make these positive changes in our lives, we need to be entirely ready to let God be our life-changer. We're not the how-and-when committee. We're the preparation committee. All we have to be is ready.

Once we start the life-changing journey found in Principle Five, we'll find VICTORY over our character defects. We find that victory by doing the following:

- V**oluntarily submit — Romans 12:1–2
- I**dentify our character defects — Proverbs 16:9
- C**hange our mind — 2 Corinthians 5:17
- T**urn over our character defects to God — James 4:10
- O**ne day at a time — Matthew 6:34
- R**ecovery is a process — Philippians 1:6
- Y**ou must choose to change — James 4:6–8

Sometimes we discover in ourselves so many character defects that it's hard to know where to start. We need to go back to the wrongs, shortcomings and sins we identified in our Principle Four inventories. Remember, falling down doesn't make us a failure; staying down does. God doesn't just want us to admit our wrongs; he wants to make us right. He wants to give us "hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). God doesn't just want to forgive us; he wants to change us. We need to ask him first to remove those character defects that are causing us the most pain. Ask him today, and be specific.

At first, our old self-doubts and low self-image may tell us we're not worthy of the growth and progress we're already making in the program. We need to turn off those old, negative thoughts and yield to the growth. It's the Holy Spirit's work within us. Through his transforming power we'll find the victory that keeps us from reverting back to our hang-ups and harmful habits.

Once we ask God to remove our character defects, we begin a journey that will lead us to new freedom from our past. We need to be careful not to look for perfection but instead to rejoice in steady progress. We need to seek, and be satisfied with, steady improvement.

The victory we receive in Principle Five is summed up in Romans 12:2:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

PRINCIPLE FIVE PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for taking me this far on my recovery journey. Now I pray for your help in making me entirely ready to change my destructive patterns. Give me the strength to deal with the character defects I've turned over to you. Allow me to accept all the changes you want to make in me. Help me to be the person you want me to be. In your Son's name I pray, Amen.

PRINCIPLE FIVE LESSONS:

READY: Go to Psalm 143:10 (p. 732).

VICTORY: Go to Romans 12:1 - 2 (p. 1409).

PRINCIPLE SIX

EVALUATE ALL MY RELATIONSHIPS. OFFER FORGIVENESS TO THOSE WHO HAVE HURT ME AND MAKE AMENDS FOR HARM I'VE DONE TO OTHERS, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD HARM THEM OR OTHERS.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

MATTHEW 5:7

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

MATTHEW 5:9

In the first five principles, we worked on repairing the personal side of our lives by admitting our powerlessness, turning our lives and wills over to God's care, doing our moral inventories, sharing our sins with someone else, admitting our shortcomings and asking God to remove them. Now we're ready to begin some repair work on the relational side of our lives. Making our amends and offering our forgiveness mark the beginning of the end of our isolation from God and others.

Principle Six is all about making amends and offering forgiveness. "Forgive me as I learn to forgive" sums up Principle Six. This is right in line with Jesus' words in the prayer he taught his disciples: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). But some of us balk at making amends. If God has forgiven me, we think, isn't that enough? Why should I dredge up the past? After all, making amends doesn't sound natural. The answer to that objection is simple: Making amends isn't about our past so much as it is about our future. Before we can enjoy the healthy relationships we desire, we need to clean out the guilt, shame and pain that have caused many of our past relationships to fail.

Luke 6:31 instructs each of us to "do to others as you would have them do to you." This verse reminds us to treat others the way we want to be treated. For some of us, that may be difficult. We've been badly hurt and/or abused. Many of us had nothing to do with the wrongs committed against us.

The first part of Principle Six, "Evaluate all my relationships," deals with our willingness to consider making amends and offering our forgiveness. The second part, "Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others," calls us to action.

We need to pull out the dead weeds in our past broken relationships so that we can clear a place where new relationships can be successfully planted or old ones nurtured. That's why this principle is so important.

How do we make AMENDS?

Admit the hurt and the harm — Luke 6:37

Make a list — Luke 6:31

Encourage one another — Hebrews 10:24

Not just for them — Luke 6:35

Do it at the right time — Ecclesiastes 3:1

Start living the promises of recovery — Joel 2:25

It's so important to make AMENDS because we can become addicted to our bitterness, hatred and revenge, just as we may have become addicted to alcohol, drugs or unhealthy relationships. A life characterized by bitterness, resentment and anger will kill us emotionally and shrivel our souls. Such a life will produce the three Ds:

Depression

Despair

Discouragement

An unforgiving heart will cause us more pain and destruction than it will ever cause the person who has hurt us.

The inability to accept and offer forgiveness can stall, block or even destroy our recovery. Forgiveness breaks that negative cycle. It doesn't settle all the questions of blame, justice or fairness, but it does allow relationships to heal.

Principle Six addresses three types of forgiveness.

The first and most important kind of forgiveness is extended by God to us. Have we accepted God's forgiveness? Have we accepted Jesus' work on the cross? By his willingness to take our punishment, all our sins were canceled. Our debt was paid in full — a free gift for those who are willing to put their faith in him as the true and only Higher Power, Savior and Lord. Jesus himself exclaimed from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30) — possibly the most significant three words ever uttered. No matter how grievously we may have injured others or ourselves, the grace of God is always sufficient. His forgiveness is always complete, with no strings attached.

The second kind of forgiveness is the kind we extend from ourselves to others. This type of forgiveness is a process. We first need to be willing to forgive. But in order to become truly free, we have to let go of the pain of the past harm and abuse caused by others.

The third kind of forgiveness may well be the most difficult for us to extend: We need to forgive ourselves. We may find the grace within ourselves to forgive others, and we may accept God's forgiveness, but we may feel as though the guilt and shame of our own pasts are just too horrendous to forgive. But this is what God wants to do with the darkness of our past:

“‘Come now, let us settle the matter,’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.’” (Isaiah 1:18). No matter how unloved or worthless we may feel, God loves us and values us highly. Our feelings about ourselves don’t change God’s assessment of us and our potential one bit.

As we grow as Christians and move through our recovery process, we want to follow the guidance and direction of Jesus Christ. As we get to know him better, we want to model his teachings and his ways. We want to become more like him. If we’re going to implement Principle Six to the best of our ability, we need to learn to model God’s grace.

But how do we model his GRACE?

- G**od’s gift — Romans 3:23 – 24
- R**eceived by our faith — Ephesians 2:8 – 9
- A**ccepted by God’s love — Colossians 3:13
- C**hrist paid the price — Ephesians 1:7
- E**verlasting gift — 2 Thessalonians 2:16 – 17

As we learn to model God’s grace, we’ll be able to complete Principle Six and discover healing in our lost and broken relationships — at least as far as that healing depends upon our action. As Romans 12:18 directs us, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”

The eighth and ninth steps of the Christ-centered 12 steps relate to Principle Six.

STEP EIGHT: We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

*Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill
is found among the upright.*

PROVERBS 14:9

STEP NINE: We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and
there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,
leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled
to them; then come and offer your gift.*

MATTHEW 5:23–24

Forgiveness is all about letting go. Remember playing tug-of-war as a child? As long as the people on each end of the rope are tugging, you have a war. You let go of your end of the rope when you forgive others. No matter how hard they may tug on their end, if you’ve released yours, the war is over. But until you release that rope, you’re a prisoner of war.

PRINCIPLE SIX PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for your love, for the grace you freely offer. Help me model your ways when I make my amends to those I've hurt and offer my forgiveness to those who've injured me. Help me set aside my selfishness and speak the truth in love. Help me focus on my own responsibility in the issue, so my actions won't be conditional. I know I can forgive others because you first forgave me. Thank you for loving me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

PRINCIPLE SIX LESSONS:

AMENDS: Go to Luke 6:37 (p. 1241).

FORGIVENESS: Go to Romans 3:22 – 26 (p. 1391).

GRACE: Go to Romans 3:23 – 24 (p. 1392).

PRINCIPLE SEVEN

RESERVE A DAILY TIME WITH GOD FOR
SELF-EXAMINATION, BIBLE READING AND PRAYER
IN ORDER TO KNOW GOD AND HIS WILL FOR MY LIFE AND
TO GAIN THE POWER TO FOLLOW HIS WILL.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

MATTHEW 5:8

When we get to Principle Seven, we've arrived at an important junction. We've already traveled a long way on our road to recovery. Our journey so far has required facing our denial; surrendering our lives to Jesus Christ; taking an honest look at our lives; listing, confessing and sharing our wrongdoings; being humble enough to allow God to make major changes in us; becoming willing to forgive or make amends; offering our forgiveness to those who've hurt us; and making amends for the harm we've caused others.

We've come to understand that we could never have made it this far on our own steam. In fact, the only reason we've reached this point is that we made a decision way back in Principle Three to turn over our lives and wills to God's care.

Jesus explains it this way in John 8:31 – 32: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Then in John 14:6 he defines truth by identifying it with himself: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." We've been set free from our habits because of the Truth (Jesus Christ) we've invited into our hearts.

STEP TEN: We continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

We've arrived at the CROSSROADS of our recoveries. This isn't a place to stop and rest on our past accomplishments. We need to thank God for getting us this far on our road to recovery; to praise him for the many victories over our hurts, hang-ups and habits that we've already seen in working the first six principles; and to continue working the last two principles with the same devotion and enthusiasm that got us to this point in our recoveries. First Corinthians 10:12 puts it this way: "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"

Most recovery material refers to Steps Ten through Twelve (Principles Seven and Eight) as the maintenance steps. It's certainly true that in these principles we'll live out our recoveries for the remainder of our time here on Earth — one day at a time! But we need to do much more than just maintain our recoveries; we need to continue to *grow* them.

In Principle Seven we desire to grow daily in our new relationships with Jesus Christ and others. Instead of attempting to be in control of every situation and every person with whom we come into contact, or instead of spinning out of control ourselves, we're starting to exhibit self-control, living the way God wants us to. Remember that "self under control" is what we're initially seeking but that self under *God's* control is what we're ultimately striving for.

As we begin to work Principle Seven and Step Ten, we'll see that this step involves three key actions:

- T**ake time to do a daily inventory — Lamentations 3:40
- E**valuate both the good and the bad — 1 John 1:8 – 10
- N**eed to admit our wrongs promptly — Matthew 5:23 – 24

One way to keep daily track of our good and bad behaviors is to keep a journal. Our journal isn't a place to jot down the calories we ingested for lunch today or our carpool schedule for school. It's a tool for us to review and record the good and bad things we did today. We can look for negative patterns, issues that we're repeatedly writing down and having to make amends for. We can share these pitfalls with our sponsors or accountability partners and set up an action plan to overcome them with God's help.

Journaling will help us live in daily humility — in reality, not in denial. Through God's guidance we can make choices about the emotions that affect our thinking and actions. When we take this step seriously, we can begin to take positive *action* — instead of getting caught up in a continuous spiral of *reaction*.

In Principle Seven, we actually do three different inventories:

1. *An ongoing inventory.* We can maintain an ongoing inventory throughout the day. The best time to admit we're wrong is at the exact time we're made aware of it. Why wait?
2. *A daily inventory.* At the end of each day we can look back over our daily activities, both the good and the bad, paying special attention to points at which we might have harmed someone else or reacted out of anger or fear. But once again, we need to remember to keep our daily inventory balanced. We should be sure to include the things we did right throughout the day, no matter how easy they may be to overlook or discount.
3. *A periodic inventory.* We should take a periodic inventory every 90 days or so. We may want to get away on a mini-retreat. We should bring our daily journal with us, and pray as we read through the entries for the last 90 days. We should ask God to show us areas in our life in which we can improve during the next 90 days. But we should also remember to identify and celebrate the victories we've already experienced.

Principle Seven is so important. It also includes Step Eleven of the Christ-centered 12 steps.

STEP ELEVEN: We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and power to carry that out.

Principle Seven is our best defense against reverting back to our old ways. If we work this principle daily, relying on God's power, it will not only help us grow in him but will prevent our RELAPSE:

- R**eserve a daily quiet time — Mark 14:38
- E**valuate — Romans 12:3,9 – 10,12,16 – 17
- L**isten to Jesus — 1 Thessalonians 5:21
- A**lone with and quiet before God — Psalm 46:10
- P**lug in to God's power — Philippians 4:6
- S**low down — Philippians 4:7
- E**njoy your growth — 1 Thessalonians 5:16 – 18

By this point in our recoveries we've learned that when we start our day working Principle Seven and having a quiet time with God, and when we end it by doing our daily inventory, we have a pretty good day — a reasonably happy day. Not only will this help to prevent relapse, but it will cultivate in us an attitude of gratitude.

To help maintain this grateful attitude, we can focus our gratitude on at least four areas of our lives:

- Be thankful to God — Psalm 107:15
- Be thankful for others — Colossians 3:15 – 16
- Be thankful for our recovery — Hebrews 12:1
- Be thankful for our church — Psalm 100:4

PRINCIPLE SEVEN PRAYER

Dear God, help me to set aside the hassles and racket of the world, so I can focus my mind and listen just to you for the next few minutes. Help me to get to know you better. Help me to better understand your plan and purpose for my life. Father, help me to live this day within the boundaries of today, seeking your will and living this one day as you would have me live it.

I pray that others may view me as yours — not just in response to my words but, more important, on account of my actions. Thank you for your love, your grace, your perfect forgiveness. Thank you for all those important individuals you've placed in my life — in my program, in my recovery and within my church family. Your will be done, not mine. In your Son's name I pray, Amen.

PRINCIPLE SEVEN LESSONS:

CROSSROADS: Go to Lamentations 3:40 (p. 964).

SPIRITUAL INVENTORY: Go to Matthew 22:37 – 40 (p. 1168).

RELAPSE: Go to Mark 14:38 (p. 1216).

GRATITUDE: Go to Psalm 107:15 (p. 710).

PRINCIPLE EIGHT

YIELD MYSELF TO GOD TO BE USED TO BRING
THIS GOOD NEWS TO OTHERS, BOTH BY
MY EXAMPLE AND BY MY WORDS.

*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

MATTHEW 5:10

Major, miraculous progress and growth have occurred in our lives since we started our recovery program, since we began working Principle One. We've stepped out of our denial into God's grace. We've taken an honest spiritual inventory. We've worked on getting right with God, ourselves and others. And we've grown in our relationship with Christ. We've discovered a new way to live life, and we're finding the serenity we've always sought. But the most exciting part is yet to come — in Principle Eight.

Principle Eight is the “giving back” principle. It's about giving back because we want to, not because we have to. We want to share with others who are still trapped in their hurts, hang-ups and habits the freedom and victory God has given us.

What is giving back all about? What does it truly mean to give? First of all, Principle Eight doesn't ask us to give in unhealthy ways, ways that might hurt us or cause us to relapse into our old, codependent behaviors. No, Principle Eight is all about healthy, non-codependent giving of ourselves — giving freely, without the slightest expectation that we will receive anything in return. No one has ever been honored, after all, for what they've received. Honor has always been a reward to those who gave.

Matthew 10:8 sums up the heart of Principle Eight:

Freely you have received; freely give.

In Principle Eight we learn what it truly means to GIVE.

God, the first Giver — Romans 8:32

I becomes we — Ecclesiastes 4:9 – 10,12

Victories shared — 2 Corinthians 1:3 – 4

Example of our actions — 1 John 3:18

Once we understand how to freely give of ourselves in healthy ways, we can start living the eighth principle, and in particular Step Twelve of the Christ-centered 12 steps.

STEP TWELVE: Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs.

Sometimes we get to Principle Eight and feel as though we really don't have anything to offer someone else. We feel as though we're not worthy of helping another person, that we're not eligible to be used by God in this way. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Here's an example. Take an old, beat-up soda can — dirty, dented, even squashed. A few years ago it would have been thrown into the garbage and deemed useless, of no continuing value. Modern technology has changed that. Today it can be recycled, melted down, purified and made into a new can — shiny and clean — that can be used again.

That's what Principle Eight does. It recycles our pain by allowing God's fire and light to shine on it — to melt down our old hurts, hang-ups and habits so we can be used again in a positive way. Our lives can be recycled to show others how we've worked the principles and steps, with Jesus' healing, and how we've come through the darkness of our pain into Christ's glorious freedom and light.

Society tells us that pain is useless. In fact, some people believe that *people* in pain are useless. At Celebrate Recovery, we know that pain has value, as do the people who experience it. So while the world says no, Principle Eight shouts a resounding YES:

Yield myself to God — Galatians 6:1 – 2

Example is important — 1 Timothy 1:5

Serve others as Jesus Christ did — John 13:14 – 15

The road to recovery leads to service. When we reach Principle Eight, the road splits. Some will choose to serve at Celebrate Recovery. Others will prefer to devote their skills to other areas in the church.

We need to share our experiences, victories and hopes with newcomers. We do that as leaders, sponsors and accountability partners. But the church also needs our service. As we lend a hand outside Celebrate Recovery, we can share with others and motivate them to get into recovery when they're ready to face their own hurts, hang-ups and habits.

The world is populated by two kinds of people — givers and takers. The takers eat well, but the givers sleep well. Be a giver. There are many, many areas in which to serve. Make suggestions. Get involved.

Principle Eight comes down to this: Do what you can with what you have, where you are.

Make your life a mission, not an intermission.

Live out Principles Seven and Eight on a daily basis for the remainder of your time on this earth, and your life will be full and rewarding as you follow God's purpose for you.

Every morning, before you get out of bed, pray this prayer:

PRINCIPLE EIGHT PRAYER

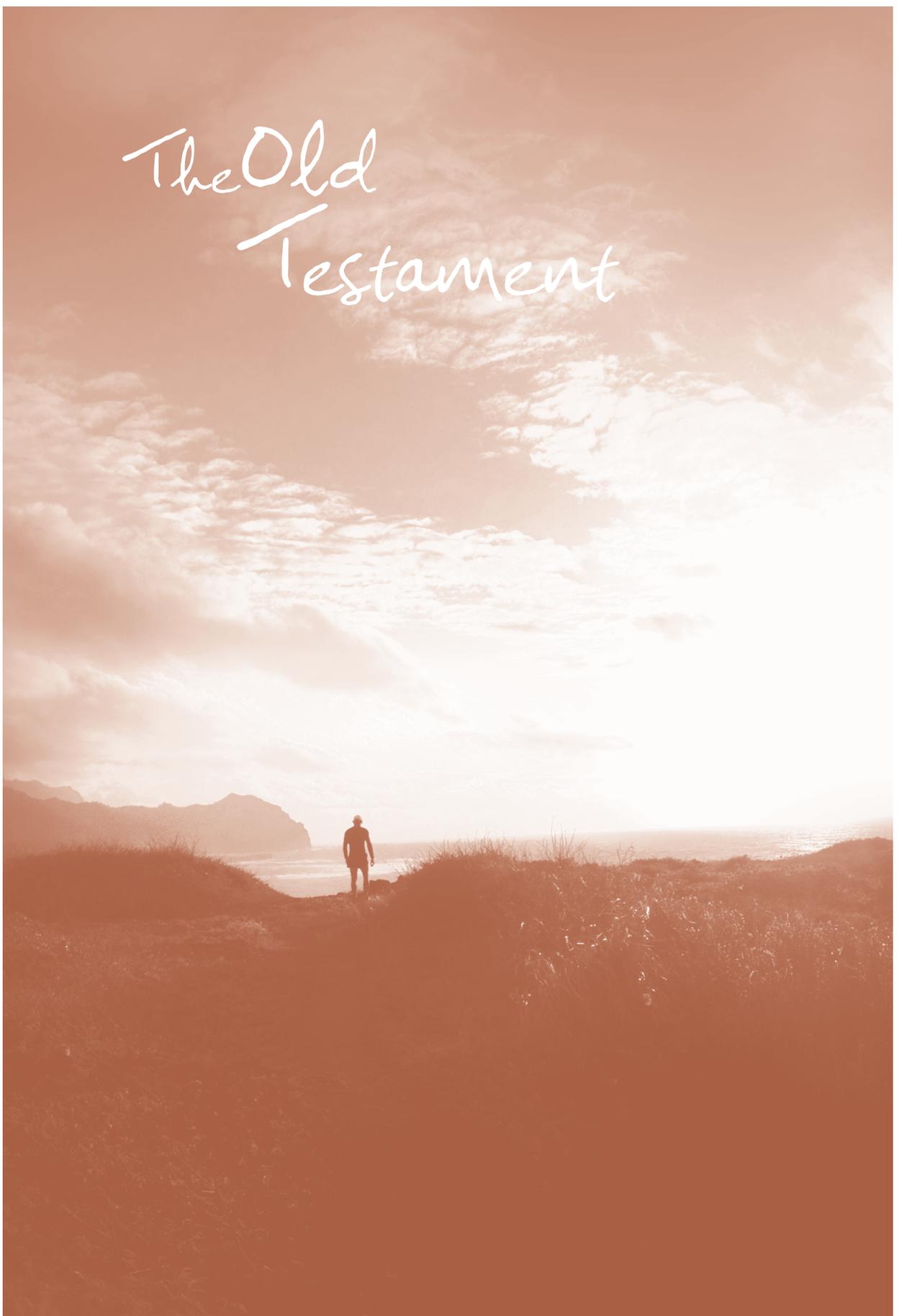
Dear Jesus, as it would please you, bring me someone today whom I can serve. Amen.

PRINCIPLE EIGHT LESSONS:

GIVE: Go to Romans 8:32 (p. 1402).

YES: Go to Galatians 6:1 – 2 (p. 1459).

The Old Testament



Genesis

THEME: God desires to relate to his creation on an intimate level.

AUTHOR: Genesis doesn't identify its author, but Scripture and church tradition ascribe authorship to Moses.

DATE OF WRITING: Genesis was probably written between 1446 and 1406 BC.

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GENESIS: "Do not be afraid . . . I am your shield, your very great reward" (Genesis 15:1).

CHALLENGE FROM GENESIS: "If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it" (Genesis 4:7).

REFLECTION FROM GENESIS: "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Genesis 18:14).

Genesis is a book of beginnings that sets the stage for all of history. In Genesis we're invited to witness the creation of the world. We get to see the world that God created and pronounced "good." Adam and Eve were able to speak freely with God, to enjoy an intimate, open, honest relationship with him — until sin entered the picture. The book of Genesis sets the scene for the rest of the Bible, for the ongoing story of a loving God who wants to reinstate a relationship with the creatures he created in his image.

Part of our recovery is our acceptance of this world as it currently is: fallen, broken and sinful. Yet when we put our faith in Christ, things begin to get better. In Genesis we face the realities of this world and the origins of the hardships we endure. Even more importantly, in Genesis we discover God's plan to bring blessing to all humankind through the seed of Abraham.

The Beginning

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

³And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was eve-

ning, and there was morning — the first day.

⁶And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning — the second day.

⁹And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰God called the dry ground "land,"

and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good.

¹¹Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹²The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³And there was evening, and there was morning — the third day.

¹⁴And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. ¹⁶God made two great lights — the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹And there was evening, and there was morning — the fourth day.

²⁰And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky.” ²¹So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²²God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” ²³And there was evening, and there was morning — the fifth day.

²⁴And God said, “Let the land produce

living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. ²⁵God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^a and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

²⁷So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

²⁹Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground — everything that has the breath of life in it — I give every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

²By the seventh day God had finished

^a 26 Probable reading of the original Hebrew text (see Syriac); Masoretic Text *the earth*

the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Adam and Eve

⁴This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, when the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.

⁵Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth^a and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶but streams^b came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷Then the LORD God formed a man^c from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

⁸Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹²(The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin^d and onyx are also there.) ¹³The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.^e ¹⁴The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

¹⁵The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from

any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”

¹⁸The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

¹⁹Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals.

But for Adam^f no suitable helper was found. ²¹So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs^g and then closed up the place with flesh. ²²Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^h he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

²³The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called ‘woman,’
for she was taken out of man.”

²⁴That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

²⁵Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

The Fall

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”

²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the

^a 5 Or land; also in verse 6 ^b 6 Or mist ^c 7 The Hebrew for man (*adam*) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for ground (*adamah*); it is also the name Adam (see verse 20). ^d 12 Or good; pearls ^e 13 Possibly southeast Mesopotamia ^f 20 Or the man ^g 21 Or took part of the man’s side ^h 22 Or part

CHARACTER STUDY

MY NAME IS EVE

GENESIS 3:1–7



Understanding recovery begins with understanding our fundamental problem: Our sin separates us from God and the blessings he wants us to enjoy. Sin's story begins with the temptation of Eve by Satan, in the guise of a serpent. Even under the perfect conditions found in the Garden of Eden, temptation found Eve. The devil's strategy was to lead the first woman to distort the word of God (see Genesis 3:1–3) and to doubt his goodness (see vv. 4–6). Eve twisted God's words by adding to them and thereby misrepresenting his directive (see v. 3). Further, God's goodness was attacked by the serpent's assertion that Eve's sin wouldn't result in death (see v. 4), as well as Satan disparaging God's motives in his directions to Adam and Eve (see v. 5). God, the enemy insinuated, was holding out on the world's first couple. Eve bought into this last lie: "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it" (v. 6). Eve's sin spread almost immediately to the only other person on the planet, her husband. She took some of the fruit to Adam and he also ate.

At this point in the story, we see that some of the serpent's predictions did indeed prove to be true. Satan had informed Eve that "when you eat . . . your eyes will be opened" (v. 5) and that these first two humans would have personal experience with both good and evil. The promise of the serpent, though, was that this would make them "like God" (v. 5). The great irony of this deception was that both Adam and Eve were already "like God," having been created in his own image (see 1:26–27). Their eyes were now opened, and they did in fact know both good and evil, but the outcome of this experience was shame (see v. 7).

This is the tragic beginning of sin's deadly, destructive work. Lives continue to be devastated as God's words are distorted and his goodness is doubted. The consequences of sin, as well as God's plans for humanity's recovery, are spelled out already in Adam and Eve's story.

garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

⁴“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. ⁵“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

⁶When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷Then the eyes of both

of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?”

¹⁰He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

1
2
3

1
2
3

DENIAL LESSON [*Principle One*]

For the previous entry in the DENIAL lesson, go to Psalm 107:13 – 14 (page 708).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii – xlv.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

GENESIS 3:7–8

The power to change comes only through God’s grace. Principle One states: “Realize I’m not God. I admit that I’m powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life has become unmanageable.” If we admit that we’re powerless, we recognize our need for a power greater than ourselves to restore us. That power is our Higher Power, the one and only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ.

In Principle One we discover that we’ve been in DENIAL of our habits. The next letter in DENIAL is *I*. Denial ISOLATES US FROM GOD. Adam and Eve are an unforgettable example of how secrets and denial separate us from true fellowship with God. After they sinned, the first couple’s secret alienated them from God. Genesis 3:7 tells us how they tried to isolate themselves from God because they were naked and felt ashamed. In verse 12 Adam tried to rationalize his sin. First he attempted to transfer the responsibility to God: “The woman you put here with me . . .” Then he tried to push the blame onto Eve: “. . . she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

But God’s light shines on the truth, even while our denial keeps us in the darkness of isolation: “If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:6–7).

The next letter in DENIAL is *A*. Go to Ephesians 4:25 (page 1467).

My Name Is Regina

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADDICTION AND ANOREXIA

Please read about Eve's deception by the serpent (Satan) in Genesis 3:1 – 7.

During my first eight years of life, my family would have been considered perfect by most observers. As the daughter of a pastor and a stay-at-home mother, I lived in a nearly idyllic setting. But my world was dramatically changed when my mother was diagnosed with cancer. When she came home from the hospital, I was allowed only to gaze at her through her bedroom door. I began to think I had only myself to rely on.

My mom survived, but the remainder of my childhood was characterized by regular moves. I wasn't good at making friends. At summer camp when I was 12 years old, I smoked marijuana for the first time. My monthly habit gradually became daily, after which I discovered other drugs. Like Eve, I falsely viewed these substances as "good . . . pleasing . . . and also desirable for gaining wisdom" (Genesis 3:6). I felt good when I was high and saw myself as fitting in better, with a heightened openness to new insights and understanding.

The difficulty was that I was a Christian; ironically, as my addiction grew, so did my love for God. I served on leadership teams at church, taught Bible studies and mentored other young women in their walks with the Lord. Yet no matter how deeply I delved into God's Word, the temptations never eased up.

I began a career in veterinary medicine, and one morning I assisted in putting an old, cancer-ridden dog to sleep. Her name was Amazing Grace. Intrigued, I asked the presiding vet how the name had been chosen. The doctor smiled and replied, "I've been repeating the same thing to her owners for years: 'She's a dud. You shouldn't have kept her. The price you'll spend on her won't be worth the time you have with her.' The dog's owners only looked at me and asked, 'What if God had said that about us?'" One more seed of the greatness of God's love was planted that day in my heart.

My pastor began talking about a mission trip, but God made it clear that I couldn't simultaneously be a missionary and a drug addict. I did go to Romania and Hungary, and a passion for reaching the world grew in my heart. Still, temptation was never far away, and within one month of returning home I was back into my addiction. Why, once again, was I using drugs

after God had so clearly intervened? I went to my pastor for help. His answer: Pray and read the Bible more. I tried, but I turned back to my habit.

I hit bottom, waking up in an emergency room after my mom used a hammer to break into my bathroom, where she found me unconscious. I lost my job due to the overdose and faced misdemeanor and felony possession charges. Sin's deadly and destructive work had almost taken its ultimate toll. A couple of days later a friend told me about Celebrate Recovery, and I walked into the Chemical Dependency group that Friday evening.

Just weeks after my overdose I departed for Israel. I was afraid I'd be unable to stay sober, but while there I made the best decision of my life — to believe what people had told me about Celebrate Recovery: "If you just start to walk through it, you'll see a miracle at the end."

When I returned home the Lord provided me with a support system. I found a sponsor, formed an accountability team and started working through the principles. I began to understand that my poor self-image was causing me to struggle with anorexia. But as I started to see myself as a child of God, I accepted God's forgiveness for the wreckage I'd caused. I asked for forgiveness and for restored relationships with my family. My mom was again diagnosed with breast cancer, and instead of running away from that relationship, I was able to stand beside her as she endured treatments and surgery.

Serving at Celebrate Recovery for the past few years has changed my life. I've handed out bulletins, led a Step Study, facilitated our Newcomers' group and led our Women's Chemically Addicted group. God didn't forget about my desire to reach the world. I've shared my story of recovery and freedom through Christ all over southern California and in many other states. I've traveled throughout Malaysia and Singapore, speaking to churches and pastors about the program. I spent a summer volunteering in a drug rehab center, leading Step Studies and sponsoring girls. Finally, God called me to El Salvador to take the Celebrate Recovery program into a drug rehab center with approximately 50 ex-gangsters, all male, and I was privileged to lead these men through the very principles that have saved my life.

I've celebrated five years of sobriety, a feat I could never have accomplished without following the Lord's will. As I've walked through job changes, parental illnesses and the deaths of friends, I've learned the truth of Philippians 4:13. I no longer live in bondage to substances, food addictions, negative feelings or the words and opinions of others. I implicitly trust God's Word and never doubt his goodness. I wake up each morning and commit my day to the Lord, knowing that he'll provide precisely the degree of strength I need for that day.



Regina

11 And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

12 The man said, “The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this,

“Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals!

You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring^a and hers; he will crush^b your head, and you will strike his heel.”

16 To the woman he said,

“I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children.

Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

17 To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’

“Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.

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

19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food

until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

20 Adam^c named his wife Eve,^d because she would become the mother of all the living.

21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. 22 And the LORD God said, “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.” 23 So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. 24 After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side^e of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Cain and Abel

4 Adam^c made love to his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.^f She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth^g a man.” 2 Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4 And Abel also brought an offering — fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel,

^a 15 Or *seed* ^b 15 Or *strike* ^c 20,1 Or *The man* ^d 20 *Eve* probably means *living*. ^e 24 Or *placed in front*
^f 1 *Cain* sounds like the Hebrew for *brought forth* or *acquired*. ^g 1 Or *have acquired*



CHARACTER STUDY

MY NAME IS ADAM

GENESIS 3:6–24

Adam's sin is followed immediately by the evidence of his (and Eve's) first experience of shame (see Genesis 3:6–7). Both tried to deal with their sin by their own devices (see v. 7), by camouflaging their wrongdoing to the best of their ability. This reaction could be labeled the world's first religion. Religion, though, is no substitute for the relationship God desires with each of us. Our best efforts leave us helpless, wallowing in our sin and shame. Adam and Eve, hearing God walking in the garden, hid themselves (see v. 8). At this point in Adam's story the road to recovery begins, and that beginning is found in God's redemptive actions:

- God loves us so much that he confronts us even as we try to hide from him (see vv. 9–10). God confronted Adam first (see vv. 9–12) and then Eve (see v. 13).
- God's confrontation is designed to lead us to confess our sin (see vv. 11,13).
- God clearly outlined the consequences of the first sin for the serpent, Satan (see vv. 14–15); for Eve (see v. 16); and for Adam (see vv. 17–19).
- God promised a future Redeemer, who would crush Satan (see v. 15).
- God provided a covering for the sin of the first human couple until their sin could be removed on the basis of Christ's sacrifice (see v. 21; see also Romans 3:21–26).

How did Adam and Eve respond to God's gracious intervention? To avoid responsibility, Adam tried to blame others: "the woman" (v. 12) — and apparently God, since he had created Eve and put her in the garden with Adam. Eve in turn pointed the finger at "the serpent" (v. 13). But excuses don't cancel consequences. Adam and Eve found themselves cast out of the garden, where the curses pronounced by God continue in effect to this day (see vv. 22–24). Genesis 5:3 contains a subtle but tragic hint about our own need for recovery: "When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image." Now, instead of being born in the image and likeness of God, each of us is born in the image and likeness of our fallen, sinful human ancestors, beginning with Adam.

What can we learn about recovery from the story of Adam?

- Consider the reality of the consequences your hurts, hang-ups and habits bring to your own life and to the lives of others.
- Come when God calls to you, even as you're trying to hide your sin and shame.
- Confess your sins when he confronts you by his Holy Spirit, knowing that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).
- Commit yourself to Christ, who will conform you to his image: "We all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Carry the Good News you've discovered to others, knowing that sin has made the need for recovery universal: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

My Name Is Dave

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTION

Please read the story of Adam and Eve's attempt to hide from God in Genesis 3:6–11.

I grew up in a loving home, where we learned a little about God and Jesus. I knew that God existed, but not much more than that. Looking back, I realize that my concept of him was woefully inaccurate.

I was introduced to alcohol and drugs shortly after I completed the eighth grade. Once I started using, I quit going to church; like Adam, I hid from God. As my addiction grew, trouble with the law followed close behind. I received my first DWI when I was 16 years old. By the time I turned 25, I had been arrested four times for drunk driving. Additionally, I was arrested several times for drug-related offenses. I was leading a self-centered, selfish life. I wrecked numerous vehicles and ruined the lives of so many people. I had no relationship with God and wasn't looking for one. I utilized drugs, alcohol and material possessions to mask the pain and shame I was feeling inside. When I found myself in deep trouble, I would pray, but I wasn't even sure who I was praying to. I mouthed the words out of desperation, without sincerity.

I was introduced to a secular 12-step program after my second arrest. After attending the program for the court-ordered 12 months, I graduated and went on with my life. It wasn't until my fourth arrest that I finally admitted that my life had become unmanageable. I remember sitting in my jail cell contemplating suicide. I had reached rock bottom and had finally come to realize that "good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:18). I went back to the secular recovery program and began genuinely working through the steps. For the first time in my adult life, I was sober.

Despite my sobriety, I found myself in the midst of a divorce. I couldn't understand it. I had stopped using drugs and alcohol. Wasn't that enough? I was devastated at the thought of being separated from my son. A year later I met someone new. Cathy had been attending church and insisted that I join her if we were going to start a relationship. The first time I

went to church with her, I was amazed. There were basketball hoops inside the church. People were singing, smiling and hugging each other. This was so different from the churches I had experienced as a child. I felt the presence of the Lord and realized that God loved me even as I continued to try to hide from him.

Soon Cathy and I began living together, which caused a huge struggle in our lives. I wasn't ready for a personal relationship with the Lord; I was just going to church to be with Cathy. I agreed to attend a Bible study with Christians who were in recovery. I had never felt such freedom. This church and the people in it were genuine. The men's ministry was such an encouragement to me. They lifted me up in prayer every day, and, as a result, I answered when God called, knelt down with my pastor, and accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. For years I'd been shackled by my addiction to alcohol and drugs. I don't ever want to forget where I came from or how I arrived—and God doesn't want me to either.

One night I met a man and began sharing my story with him. He began praying with me, and much to my surprise he prayed that I would move out of Cathy's home. Cathy and I weren't married at that point, and I felt convicted. I immediately went home and told Cathy that I was moving out until we got married. God answered prayer, and we were married a short time later. We joined our church and got involved in a small group. It was obvious, though, that God wanted more from us. He moved in our hearts to start a recovery ministry, a place where we could reach others struggling with addictions—where we could share with them the love of Jesus Christ and the 12 steps. As we were searching for a program to utilize in our church, we stumbled upon Celebrate Recovery. In January of 1999 we held our first meeting. It's comforting to realize that, even though the people who attend Celebrate Recovery come from different backgrounds, the answer to all of our hurts, hang-ups and habits is the same: the one and only higher power, Jesus Christ.

Scripture tells us that Adam and Eve "heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden" (Genesis 3:8). Like Adam, my sin caused me to hide from God, but it was shortly after that point that my road to recovery began.

Dave

“Let’s go out to the field.”^a While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

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

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

¹⁰The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground. ¹¹Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. ¹²When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

¹³Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. ¹⁴Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

¹⁵But the LORD said to him, “Not so^b; anyone who kills Cain will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. ¹⁶So Cain went out from the LORD’s presence and lived in the land of Nod,^c east of Eden.

¹⁷Cain made love to his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch. ¹⁸To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad was the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael was the father of Methushael, and Methushael was the father of Lamech.

¹⁹Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah. ²⁰Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. ²¹His brother’s name was Jubal; he was the father of all who play stringed instruments and pipes. ²²Zillah also had a son, Tubal-Cain, who forged all kinds of tools out of^d

bronze and iron. Tubal-Cain’s sister was Naamah.

²³Lamech said to his wives,

“Adah and Zillah, listen to me;
wives of Lamech, hear my words.
I have killed a man for wounding me,
a young man for injuring me.

²⁴If Cain is avenged seven times,
then Lamech seventy-seven times.”

²⁵Adam made love to his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth,^e saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” ²⁶Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh.

At that time people began to call on^f the name of the LORD.

From Adam to Noah

5 This is the written account of Adam’s family line.

When God created mankind, he made them in the likeness of God. ²He created them male and female and blessed them. And he named them “Mankind”^g when they were created.

³When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. ⁴After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁵Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died.

⁶When Seth had lived 105 years, he became the father^h of Enosh. ⁷After he became the father of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and had other sons and daughters. ⁸Altogether, Seth lived a total of 912 years, and then he died.

⁹When Enosh had lived 90 years, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰After he became the father of Kenan, Enosh lived 815 years and had other sons and daughters.

^a 8 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Masoretic Text does not have “Let’s go out to the field.”

^b 15 Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac; Hebrew *Very well* ^c 16 *Nod* means *wandering* (see verses 12 and 14).

^d 22 Or *who instructed all who work in* ^e 25 *Seth* probably means *granted*. ^f 26 Or *to proclaim*

^g 2 Hebrew *adam* ^h 6 *Father* may mean *ancestor*; also in verses 7-26.

¹¹Altogether, Enosh lived a total of 905 years, and then he died.

¹²When Kenan had lived 70 years, he became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³After he became the father of Mahalalel, Kenan lived 840 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Altogether, Kenan lived a total of 910 years, and then he died.

¹⁵When Mahalalel had lived 65 years, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶After he became the father of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Altogether, Mahalalel lived a total of 895 years, and then he died.

¹⁸When Jared had lived 162 years, he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹After he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Altogether, Jared lived a total of 962 years, and then he died.

²¹When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²²After he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked faithfully with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. ²³Altogether, Enoch lived a total of 365 years. ²⁴Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

²⁵When Methuselah had lived 187 years, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁶After he became the father of Lamech, Methuselah lived 782 years and had other sons and daughters. ²⁷Altogether, Methuselah lived a total of 969 years, and then he died.

²⁸When Lamech had lived 182 years, he had a son. ²⁹He named him Noah^a and said, “He will comfort us in the labor and painful toil of our hands caused by the ground the LORD has cursed.” ³⁰After Noah was born, Lamech lived 595 years and had other sons and daughters. ³¹Altogether, Lamech lived a total of 777 years, and then he died.

³²After Noah was 500 years old, he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth.

Wickedness in the World

6 When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, ²the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. ³Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not contend with^b humans forever, for they are mortal^c; their days will be a hundred and twenty years.”

⁴The Nephilim were on the earth in those days — and also afterward — when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

⁵The LORD saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. ⁶The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. ⁷So the LORD said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created — and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground — for I regret that I have made them.” ⁸But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

Noah and the Flood

⁹This is the account of Noah and his family.

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. ¹⁰Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth.

¹¹Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. ¹²God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. ¹³So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. ¹⁴So make yourself an ark of cypress^d wood; make rooms in it and coat it

^a 29 Noah sounds like the Hebrew for *comfort*. ^b 3 Or *My spirit will not remain in* ^c 3 Or *corrupt*

^d 14 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain.

with pitch inside and out. ¹⁵This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.^a ¹⁶Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit^b high all around.^c Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. ¹⁷I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark — you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them.”

²²Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

7 The LORD then said to Noah, “Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. ²Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate,³ and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. ⁴Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made.”

⁵And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.

⁶Noah was six hundred years old when the floodwaters came on the earth. ⁷And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the

waters of the flood. ⁸Pairs of clean and unclean animals, of birds and of all creatures that move along the ground, ⁹male and female, came to Noah and entered the ark, as God had commanded Noah. ¹⁰And after the seven days the floodwaters came on the earth.

¹¹In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, on the seventeenth day of the second month — on that day all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. ¹²And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.

¹³On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark. ¹⁴They had with them every wild animal according to its kind, all livestock according to their kinds, every creature that moves along the ground according to its kind and every bird according to its kind, everything with wings. ¹⁵Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. ¹⁶The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

¹⁷For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. ¹⁸The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water. ¹⁹They rose greatly on the earth, and all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered. ²⁰The waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits.^{d,e} ²¹Every living thing that moved on land perished — birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. ²²Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. ²³Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; people and

^a 15 That is, about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high or about 135 meters long, 23 meters wide and 14 meters high ^b 16 That is, about 18 inches or about 45 centimeters ^c 16 The meaning of the Hebrew for this clause is uncertain. ^d 20 That is, about 23 feet or about 6.8 meters ^e 20 Or rose more than fifteen cubits, and the mountains were covered

animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark.

²⁴The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

8 But God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and the livestock that were with him in the ark, and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded. ²Now the springs of the deep and the floodgates of the heavens had been closed, and the rain had stopped falling from the sky. ³The water receded steadily from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, ⁴and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. ⁵The waters continued to recede until the tenth month, and on the first day of the tenth month the tops of the mountains became visible.

⁶After forty days Noah opened a window he had made in the ark ⁷and sent out a raven, and it kept flying back and forth until the water had dried up from the earth. ⁸Then he sent out a dove to see if the water had receded from the surface of the ground. ⁹But the dove could find nowhere to perch because there was water over all the surface of the earth; so it returned to Noah in the ark. He reached out his hand and took the dove and brought it back to himself in the ark. ¹⁰He waited seven more days and again sent out the dove from the ark. ¹¹When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth. ¹²He waited seven more days and sent the dove out again, but this time it did not return to him.

¹³By the first day of the first month of Noah's six hundred and first year, the water had dried up from the earth. Noah then removed the covering from the ark and saw that the surface of the ground was dry.

¹⁴By the twenty-seventh day of the second month the earth was completely dry.

¹⁵Then God said to Noah, ¹⁶"Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. ¹⁷Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you — the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground — so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number on it."

¹⁸So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons' wives. ¹⁹All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds — everything that moves on land — came out of the ark, one kind after another.

²⁰Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. ²¹The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though^a every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.

²²"As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease."

God's Covenant With Noah

9 Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. ²The fear and dread of you will fall on all the beasts of the earth, and on all the birds in the sky, on every creature that moves along the ground, and on all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. ³Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

⁴"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. ⁵And for your lifeblood

^a 21 Or *humans, for*

I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being.

⁶“Whoever sheds human blood,
by humans shall their blood be shed;
for in the image of God
has God made mankind.

⁷As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it.”

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹“I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰and with every living creature that was with you — the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you — every living creature on earth. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹²And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

¹⁷So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

The Sons of Noah

¹⁸The sons of Noah who came out of the

ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) ¹⁹These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth.

²⁰Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded^a to plant a vineyard. ²¹When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. ²²Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father naked and told his two brothers outside. ²³But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father’s naked body. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father naked.

²⁴When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him, ²⁵he said,

“Cursed be Canaan!
The lowest of slaves
will he be to his brothers.”

²⁶He also said,

“Praise be to the LORD, the God of
Shem!

May Canaan be the slave of Shem.

²⁷May God extend Japheth’s^b territory;
may Japheth live in the tents of Shem,
and may Canaan be the slave of
Japheth.”

²⁸After the flood Noah lived 350 years. ²⁹Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died.

The Table of Nations

10 This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah’s sons, who themselves had sons after the flood.

The Japhethites

²The sons^c of Japheth:

Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshek and Tiras.

^a 20 Or *soil, was the first* ^b 27 *Japheth* sounds like the Hebrew for *extend*. ^c 2 *Sons* may mean *descendants* or *successors* or *nations*; also in verses 3, 4, 6, 7, 20-23, 29 and 31.

- ³The sons of Gomer:
Ashkenaz, Riphath and Togarmah.
⁴The sons of Javan:
Elishah, Tarshish, the Kittites and the Rodanites.^a ⁵(From these the maritime peoples spread out into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.)

The Hamites

- ⁶The sons of Ham:
Cush, Egypt, Put and Canaan.
⁷The sons of Cush:
Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah and Sabteka.
The sons of Raamah:
Sheba and Dedan.

⁸Cush was the father^b of Nimrod, who became a mighty warrior on the earth. ⁹He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; that is why it is said, “Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the LORD.” ¹⁰The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Uruk, Akkad and Kalneh, in^c Shinar.^d ¹¹From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir,^e Calah ¹²and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah — which is the great city.

- ¹³Egypt was the father of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, ¹⁴Pathrusites, Kasluhites (from whom the Philistines came) and Caphtorites.
¹⁵Canaan was the father of Sidon his firstborn,^f and of the Hittites, ¹⁶Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, ¹⁷Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, ¹⁸Arvadites, Zemarites and Hamathites.

Later the Canaanite clans scattered ¹⁹and the borders of Canaan reached from Sidon toward Gerar as far as Gaza, and

then toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, as far as Lasha.

²⁰These are the sons of Ham by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

The Semites

²¹Sons were also born to Shem, whose older brother was^g Japheth; Shem was the ancestor of all the sons of Eber.

²²The sons of Shem:
Elam, Ashur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram.

²³The sons of Aram:
Uz, Hul, Gether and Meshek.^h

²⁴Arphaxad was the father ofⁱ Shelah, and Shelah the father of Eber.

²⁵Two sons were born to Eber:
One was named Peleg,^j because in his time the earth was divided; his brother was named Joktan.

²⁶Joktan was the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²⁷Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²⁸Obal, Abimael, Sheba, ²⁹Ophir, Havilah and Jobab. All these were sons of Joktan.

³⁰The region where they lived stretched from Mesha toward Sephar, in the eastern hill country.

³¹These are the sons of Shem by their clans and languages, in their territories and nations.

³²These are the clans of Noah’s sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood.

The Tower of Babel

11 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. ²As people moved eastward,^k

^a 4 Some manuscripts of the Masoretic Text and Samaritan Pentateuch (see also Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:7); most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *Dodanites* ^b 8 *Father* may mean *ancestor* or *predecessor* or *founder*; also in verses 13, 15, 24 and 26. ^c 10 Or *Uruk and Akkad — all of them in* ^d 10 That is, *Babylonia* ^e 11 Or *Nineveh with its city squares* ^f 15 Or *Of the Sidonians, the foremost* ^g 21 Or *Shem, the older brother of* ^h 23 See Septuagint and 1 Chron. 1:17; Hebrew *Mash*. ⁱ 24 Hebrew; Septuagint *father of Cainan, and Cainan was the father of* ^j 25 *Peleg* means *division*. ^k 2 Or *from the east; or in the east*

they found a plain in Shinar^a and settled there.

³They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

⁵But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

⁸So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹That is why it was called Babel^b—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

From Shem to Abram

¹⁰This is the account of Shem’s family line.

Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father^c of Arphaxad. ¹¹And after he became the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹²When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. ¹³And after he became the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.^d

¹⁴When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber. ¹⁵And after he became the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁶When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. ¹⁷And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

¹⁸When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. ¹⁹And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁰When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug. ²¹And after he became the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

²²When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor. ²³And after he became the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁴When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah. ²⁵And after he became the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

²⁶After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

Abram’s Family

²⁷This is the account of Terah’s family line.

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot. ²⁸While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth. ²⁹Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram’s wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor’s wife was Milkah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milkah and Iskah. ³⁰Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive.

³¹Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there.

^a 2 That is, Babylonia ^b 9 That is, Babylon; *Babel* sounds like the Hebrew for *confused*. ^c 10 *Father* may mean *ancestor*; also in verses 11-25. ^d 12,13 Hebrew; Septuagint (see also Luke 3:35, 36 and note at Gen. 10:24) 35 years, he became the father of Cainan. ¹³And after he became the father of Cainan, Arphaxad lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan had lived 130 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, Cainan lived 330 years and had other sons and daughters

³²Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Harran.

The Call of Abram

12 The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

²“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.^a
³I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”^b

7 **8** ⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. ⁵He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.

⁶Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring^c I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

⁸From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

⁹Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Abram in Egypt

¹⁰Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. ¹¹As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, “I know what a beautiful woman you are. ¹²When the

Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. ¹³Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”

¹⁴When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was a very beautiful woman. ¹⁵And when Pharaoh’s officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. ¹⁶He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

¹⁷But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram’s wife Sarai. ¹⁸So Pharaoh summoned Abram. “What have you done to me?” he said. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? ¹⁹Why did you say, ‘She is my sister,’ so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!” ²⁰Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

Abram and Lot Separate

13 So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. ²Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold.

³From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier ⁴and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD.

⁵Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶But the land could not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. ⁷And quarreling arose between Abram’s herders and Lot’s. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time.

^a 2 Or be seen as blessed ^b 3 Or earth / will use your name in blessings (see 48:20) ^c 7 Or seed

My Name Is Carl

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH FEAR, SEXUAL ADDICTION AND ALCOHOLISM

Please read the story of Abram's fear-based deception of Pharaoh, as well as of God's future blessings, in Genesis 12:10 — 13:2.

I've spent most of my life hampered by feelings of insecurity, worthlessness, panic, anxiety and downright terror.

I was raised in the 1950s by an alcoholic father and a controlling mother. There was no physical abuse, but my parents used rage and fear to intimidate me into submission. When I was six years old, my family was returning home one evening from visiting my grandparents when I offered a stick of gum to one of my siblings. Dad, immediately realizing that I'd stolen the gum from my grandparents, confronted me. I admitted my transgression, fully expecting a spanking when we got home. Instead, Dad pulled over and asked curtly, "Do you know what happens to thieves?" I responded in the negative, and he replied, "They go to prison." He pointed to a dark, scary building we were just passing and informed me that this was the very prison where I'd be staying for the next 20 years. He instructed me to hand over all of my possessions and beg God for his forgiveness. My brother, sisters and I were all screaming in fear. My spirit was broken. After that harrowing experience I gradually learned to anticipate my parents' moods and to feed them the appropriate responses. Instead of becoming resentful, I tried all the harder to please them. I craved love and affection but felt absolutely unworthy.

My experiences were reinforced by my religious upbringing. Salvation, according to my parents' theology, was based on an impossible-to-achieve degree of perfection. I truly thought that if I committed a mortal sin and died without confessing it, God would send me to hell for all eternity. I learned to put on a mask of piety, while inside I was consumed by terror and guilt. As my faith was pushed aside by my fears, I was left to my own strategies to establish some semblance of security.

I was married for 19 years before divorcing. My wife and I fought often; after token resistance, my pattern was to feel guilty and give in. We were miserable, but, afraid of losing her, I started going to prostitutes and was eventually found out. After the divorce I decided

to live for myself, without regard for anyone else's approval. The illusion of control brought a measure of comfort. I partied for the next four years, but the price tag was steep. I became addicted to prostitution, pornography and alcohol, and began experimenting with drugs. But no matter what I did I couldn't escape the childlike fear that still gripped me. I began working as a bouncer at a local bar, smuggled steroids across the border for my personal use, took karate and got tattooed. Gradually I came to realize, though, that I had simply traded in one form of bondage for another.

At this point God reached out to me. I began attending church and for the first time in my life heard who Jesus really is. I'd been taught that he was a victim; only now did I learn that he'd *chosen* to die, and that he'd done it for me!

It took a DUI to get me into recovery. Pastor Rick Warren began a series of sermons on recovery, and the following Friday the Lord introduced me to Celebrate Recovery. I knew right away that I had found my promised land. No one there enabled, judged or attempted to fix me. Instead, they offered me the one thing I'd always craved: unconditional love. I can relate to Abram and am especially amazed at how graciously, in spite of Abram's failure, God increased his wealth. After Abram was forced out of his denial, he began a journey of recovery.

As time passed, I was blessed with the complete restoration of my relationship with my parents. I shared Christ with my mom, and God gave me the words and the loving heart to meet her where she was. She accepted the Lord, as did my dad shortly thereafter. One month later Dad went home to be with Christ.

Like Abram, I went from being a man of fear to becoming a man of faith. The Lord did for me what I could never have done for myself: He loved me enough to empower me with the gift that was to transform my life. He enabled me to choose not to be held hostage to my feelings, but instead to live by faith, despite my feelings. God regularly helps me combat the old lies through the study of Biblical truth.

Today I'm celebrating 15 years of sobriety. I'm so grateful to the Lord for the principles and steps of Celebrate Recovery, as well as for my accountability partners. His power and unconditional love have endowed me with a passion to be used by him to serve others, which I do especially as a co-leader of the Adult Children of Alcoholics group and as an encourager-coach for the Men's Recovery groups.

As 1 John 4:18 so aptly reminds me, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear."

Carl



6 ⁸So Abram said to Lot, “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herders and mine, for we are close relatives. ⁹Is not the whole land before you? Let’s part company. If you go to the left, I’ll go to the right; if you go to the right, I’ll go to the left.”

¹⁰Lot looked around and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan toward Zoar was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

¹¹So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: ¹²Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. ¹³Now the people of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.

¹⁴The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. ¹⁵All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring^a forever. ¹⁶I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. ¹⁷Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.”

¹⁸So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the LORD.

Abram Rescues Lot

14 At the time when Amraphel was king of Shinar,^b Arioch king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goyim, ²these kings went to war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboyim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). ³All these latter kings joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Dead Sea Valley). ⁴For

twelve years they had been subject to Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

⁵In the fourteenth year, Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him went out and defeated the Rephaites in Ashteroth Karnaïm, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emites in Shaveh Kiriathaim ⁶and the Horites in the hill country of Seir, as far as El Paran near the desert. ⁷Then they turned back and went to En Mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and they conquered the whole territory of the Amalekites, as well as the Amorites who were living in Hazezon Tamar.

⁸Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboyim and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) marched out and drew up their battle lines in the Valley of Siddim ⁹against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goyim, Amraphel king of Shinar and Arioch king of Ellasar — four kings against five. ¹⁰Now the Valley of Siddim was full of tar pits, and when the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some of the men fell into them and the rest fled to the hills. ¹¹The four kings seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food; then they went away. ¹²They also carried off Abram’s nephew Lot and his possessions, since he was living in Sodom.

¹³A man who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother^c of Eshkol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram. ¹⁴When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵During the night Abram divided his men to attack them and he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus. ¹⁶He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people.

¹⁷After Abram returned from defeating

^a 15 Or *seed*; also in verse 16

^b 1 That is, *Babylonia*; also in verse 9

^c 13 Or *a relative*; or *an ally*



CHARACTER STUDY

MY NAME IS ABRAM

GENESIS 12:10 — 13:18

Abram (whose name was later changed to Abraham) is elsewhere in the Bible identified as “the man of faith” (Galatians 3:9). The first nine verses of Genesis 12 provide powerful validation of Abram’s great faith. Despite this, Abram knew fear and anxiety. When faith is shoved aside by fear, we’re left to our own strategies for establishing a sense of security. Famine sent Abram on a journey to Egypt. As he approached the land of Pharaoh, he devised a deception that required his wife, Sarai, to lie. Abram was willing to surrender his wife to Pharaoh in a ploy to save his own life.

For a time the illusion of control brought comfort. Abram’s scheme seemed to be working. In fact, he grew wealthier on account of Pharaoh’s delight in Sarai (see Genesis 12:16). But God, who had great plans for Abram, brought Abram’s secrets into the light (see vv. 17–18). Pharaoh confronted Abram with the predictable results of his trickery and sent him packing (see vv. 19–20). Abram, “the man of faith,” was rightly rebuked by a pagan king.

Our fears can crowd out our faith during times of testing. And some people live with a generalized sense of fear all the time. A pervasive cloud of anxiety hovers around them, and their fear is a continuous emotional state, independent of any clear threat. Like Abram, we’re tempted to grasp for more and more control over our circumstances. This lust for power often leads people to manipulate those they love, including family members and friends. But controlling behavior leaves no room for faith to operate.

Control over our world is ultimately an illusion. Only God is big enough to manage our circumstances. God loved Abram, and he loves us, too much to let us live lives of delusion. At some point our schemes inevitably fall apart and our secrets are exposed. Abram experienced a painful, public exposure of his lies. Out of this mess came a message: Relinquish the reins to God.

Upon his return to the promised land, Abram faced a pressing, practical problem. He and Lot had grown so wealthy in herds that they could no longer occupy the same area of grazing land (see 13:5–7). God had deeded all of Canaan to Abram. But Abram was now ready to trust God completely. Although Abram had every right to determine which area would be apportioned to Lot, he allowed his nephew to choose. Not surprisingly, Lot selected the best for himself.

Faith that is tested and proven provides a fresh perspective on God’s goodness. Abram, willing to trust God in this new dilemma, received a fresh revelation: God assured him that all of the promised land remained in his possession (see 13:14–17).

Abram’s exercise of faith in this situation had its roots in his renewed worship of God (see 13:3–4). God, not Abram or even Pharaoh, was in charge in Egypt. Forced out of his denial, Abram began a journey of recovery that took him “from place to place until he came to Bethel” (13:3)—meaning “house of God.” Significantly, this was the precise location at which Abram “had first built an altar” (13:4).

Overcoming fear isn’t about finding a new faith. Freedom from fear is exercising faith in the same God we’ve trusted all along but applying it to new situations. Significantly, Abram returned to Bethel and “called on the name of the LORD” (13:4).

Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

¹⁸Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, ¹⁹and he blessed Abram, saying,

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰And praise be to God Most High,
who delivered your enemies into
your hand.”

Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

²¹The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.”

²²But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “With raised hand I have sworn an oath to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, ²³that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the strap of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’ ²⁴I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me — to Aner, Eshkol and Mamre. Let them have their share.”

The LORD's Covenant With Abram

15 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:

“Do not be afraid, Abram.
I am your shield,^a
your very great reward.^b”

²But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit^c my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” ³And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”

⁴Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a

son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.” ⁵He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars — if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring^d be.”

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

⁷He also said to him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.”

⁸But Abram said, “Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?”

⁹So the LORD said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

¹⁰Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. ¹¹Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

¹²As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. ¹³Then the LORD said to him, “Know for certain that for four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own and that they will be enslaved and mistreated there. ¹⁴But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. ¹⁵You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

¹⁷When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi^e of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates — ¹⁹the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, ²⁰Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites,

^a 1 Or sovereign ^b 1 Or shield; / your reward will be very great ^c 2 The meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain. ^d 5 Or seed ^e 18 Or river

²¹Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites.”

Hagar and Ishmael

16 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; ²so she said to Abram, “The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.”

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. ⁴He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.

When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. ⁵Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.”

⁶“Your slave is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.” Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

⁷The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. ⁸And he said, “Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?”

“I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered.

⁹Then the angel of the LORD told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.” ¹⁰The angel added, “I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count.”

¹¹The angel of the LORD also said to her:

“You are now pregnant
and you will give birth to a son.
You shall name him Ishmael,^a
for the LORD has heard of your
misery.

¹²He will be a wild donkey of a man;
his hand will be against everyone
and everyone’s hand against him,
and he will live in hostility
toward^b all his brothers.”

¹³She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen^c the One who sees me.” ¹⁴That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi^d; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. ¹⁶Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

The Covenant of Circumcision

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty^e; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. ²Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”

³Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵No longer will you be called Abram^f; your name will be Abraham,^g for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

⁹Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. ¹⁰This is my covenant

1
2
3

7
8

^a 11 Ishmael means God hears. ^b 12 Or live to the east / of ^c 13 Or seen the back of ^d 14 Beer Lahai Roi means well of the Living One who sees me. ^e 1 Hebrew El-Shaddai ^f 5 Abram means exalted father. ^g 5 Abraham probably means father of many.

with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. ¹²For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner — those who are not your offspring. ¹³Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

¹⁵God also said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

¹⁷Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” ¹⁸And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”

¹⁹Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac.^a I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. ²⁰And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. ²¹But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.” ²²When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.

²³On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male

in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. ²⁴Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, ²⁵and his son Ishmael was thirteen; ²⁶Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that very day. ²⁷And every male in Abraham’s household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

The Three Visitors

18 The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. ²Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

³He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord,^b do not pass your servant by. ⁴Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. ⁵Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way — now that you have come to your servant.”

“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

⁶So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs^c of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

⁷Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. ⁸He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

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

“There, in the tent,” he said.

¹⁰Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance

^a 19 Isaac means *he laughs*.

^b 3 Or *eyes, Lord*

^c 6 That is, probably about 36 pounds or about 16 kilograms

to the tent, which was behind him. ¹¹Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. ¹²So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

¹³Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ ¹⁴Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

¹⁵Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

Abraham Pleads for Sodom

¹⁶When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. ¹⁷Then the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? ¹⁸Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him.^a ¹⁹For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.”

²⁰Then the LORD said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous ²¹that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.”

²²The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.^b ²³Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? ²⁴What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare^c the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? ²⁵Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous

with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

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

²⁷Then Abraham spoke up again: “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, ²⁸what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five people?”

“If I find forty-five there,” he said, “I will not destroy it.”

²⁹Once again he spoke to him, “What if only forty are found there?”

He said, “For the sake of forty, I will not do it.”

³⁰Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?”

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

³¹Abraham said, “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?”

He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.”

³²Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?”

He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.”

³³When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.

Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

19 The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. ²“My lords,” he said, “please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.”

^a 18 Or will use his name in blessings (see 48:20) ^b 22 Masoretic Text; an ancient Hebrew scribal tradition but the LORD remained standing before Abraham ^c 24 Or forgive; also in verse 26

“No,” they answered, “we will spend the night in the square.”

³But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. ⁴Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom — both young and old — surrounded the house. ⁵They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.”

⁶Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him ⁷and said, “No, my friends. Don’t do this wicked thing. ⁸Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don’t do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.”

⁹“Get out of our way,” they replied. “This fellow came here as a foreigner, and now he wants to play the judge! We’ll treat you worse than them.” They kept bringing pressure on Lot and moved forward to break down the door.

¹⁰But the men inside reached out and pulled Lot back into the house and shut the door. ¹¹Then they struck the men who were at the door of the house, young and old, with blindness so that they could not find the door.

¹²The two men said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here — sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, ¹³because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.”

¹⁴So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry^a his daughters. He said, “Hurry and get out of this place, because the LORD is about to destroy the city!” But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

¹⁵With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished.”

¹⁶When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the LORD was merciful to them. ¹⁷As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, “Flee for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!”

¹⁸But Lot said to them, “No, my lords,^b please! ¹⁹Your^c servant has found favor in your^c eyes, and you^c have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can’t flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I’ll die. ²⁰Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it — it is very small, isn’t it? Then my life will be spared.”

²¹He said to him, “Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. ²²But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it.” (That is why the town was called Zoar.^d)

²³By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. ²⁴Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah — from the LORD out of the heavens. ²⁵Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities — and also the vegetation in the land. ²⁶But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the LORD. ²⁸He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.

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^a 14 Or *were married to* ^b 18 Or *No, Lord; or No, my lord* ^c 19 The Hebrew is singular. ^d 22 *Zoar* means *small*.

²⁹So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived.

Lot and His Daughters

³⁰Lot and his two daughters left Zoar and settled in the mountains, for he was afraid to stay in Zoar. He and his two daughters lived in a cave. ³¹One day the older daughter said to the younger, “Our father is old, and there is no man around here to give us children — as is the custom all over the earth. ³²Let’s get our father to drink wine and then sleep with him and preserve our family line through our father.”

³³That night they got their father to drink wine, and the older daughter went in and slept with him. He was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁴The next day the older daughter said to the younger, “Last night I slept with my father. Let’s get him to drink wine again tonight, and you go in and sleep with him so we can preserve our family line through our father.” ³⁵So they got their father to drink wine that night also, and the younger daughter went in and slept with him. Again he was not aware of it when she lay down or when she got up.

³⁶So both of Lot’s daughters became pregnant by their father. ³⁷The older daughter had a son, and she named him Moab^a; he is the father of the Moabites of today. ³⁸The younger daughter also had a son, and she named him Ben-Ammi^b; he is the father of the Ammonites^c of today.

Abraham and Abimelek

20 Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar,² and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, “She is my sister.” Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her.

³But God came to Abimelek in a dream one night and said to him, “You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.”

⁴Now Abimelek had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? ⁵Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother’? I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.”

⁶Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her. ⁷Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all who belong to you will die.”

⁸Early the next morning Abimelek summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid. ⁹Then Abimelek called Abraham in and said, “What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done.” ¹⁰And Abimelek asked Abraham, “What was your reason for doing this?”

¹¹Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ ¹²Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. ¹³And when God had me wander from my father’s household, I said to her, ‘This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.”’”

¹⁴Then Abimelek brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. ¹⁵And Abimelek said, “My land is before you; live wherever you like.”

¹⁶To Sarah he said, “I am giving your brother a thousand shekels^d of silver. This

^a 37 Moab sounds like the Hebrew for *from father*. ^b 38 Ben-Ammi means *son of my father’s people*.

^c 38 Hebrew *Bene-Ammon* ^d 16 That is, about 25 pounds or about 12 kilograms

is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”

¹⁷Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again, ¹⁸for the LORD had kept all the women in Abimelek’s household from conceiving because of Abraham’s wife Sarah.

The Birth of Isaac

21 Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. ²Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. ³Abraham gave the name Isaac^a to the son Sarah bore him. ⁴When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. ⁵Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

⁶Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” ⁷And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away

⁸The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. ⁹But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, ¹⁰and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

¹¹The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. ¹²But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring^b will be reckoned. ¹³I will make the son of the

slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

¹⁴Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

¹⁵When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there, she^c began to sob.

¹⁷God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

¹⁹Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. ²¹While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

The Treaty at Beersheba

²²At that time Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, “God is with you in everything you do. ²³Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you now reside as a foreigner the same kindness I have shown to you.”

²⁴Abraham said, “I swear it.”

²⁵Then Abraham complained to Abimelek about a well of water that Abimelek’s servants had seized. ²⁶But Abimelek said, “I don’t know who has done this. You did not tell me, and I heard about it only today.”

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^a 3 Isaac means *he laughs*. ^b 12 Or *seed* ^c 16 Hebrew; Septuagint *the child*

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²⁷So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelek, and the two men made a treaty. ²⁸Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, ²⁹and Abimelek asked Abraham, “What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?”

³⁰He replied, “Accept these seven lambs from my hand as a witness that I dug this well.”

³¹So that place was called Beersheba,^a because the two men swore an oath there.

³²After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. ³³Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Eternal God. ³⁴And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time.

Abraham Tested

22 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

²Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love — Isaac — and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.”

³Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.”

⁶Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife.

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As the two of them went on together, ⁷Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Abraham replied.

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

⁸Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together.

⁹When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

¹²“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

¹³Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram^b caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”

¹⁵The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸and through your offspring^c all nations on earth will be blessed,^d because you have obeyed me.”

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^a 31 Beersheba can mean *well of seven* and *well of the oath*. ^b 13 Many manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint and Syriac; most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *a ram behind him*
^c 18 Or *seed* ^d 18 Or *and all nations on earth will use the name of your offspring in blessings* (see 48:20)

¹⁹Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.

Nahor's Sons

²⁰Some time later Abraham was told, "Milkah is also a mother; she has borne sons to your brother Nahor: ²¹Uz the first-born, Buz his brother, Kemuel (the father of Aram), ²²Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlap and Bethuel." ²³Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. Milkah bore these eight sons to Abraham's brother Nahor. ²⁴His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also had sons: Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maakah.

The Death of Sarah

23 Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. ²She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her.

³Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites.^a He said, ⁴"I am a foreigner and stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead."

⁵The Hittites replied to Abraham, ⁶"Sir, listen to us. You are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead."

⁷Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. ⁸He said to them, "If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf⁹ so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you."

¹⁰Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. ¹¹"No, my lord,"

he said. "Listen to me; I give^b you the field, and I give^b you the cave that is in it. I give^b it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead."

¹²Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land ¹³and he said to Ephron in their hearing, "Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there."

¹⁴Ephron answered Abraham, ¹⁵"Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels^c of silver, but what is that between you and me? Bury your dead."

¹⁶Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants.

¹⁷So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre — both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field — was deeded ¹⁸to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. ¹⁹Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. ²⁰So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.

Isaac and Rebekah

24 Abraham was now very old, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. ²He said to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh. ³I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, ⁴but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac."

⁵The servant asked him, "What if the

^a 3 Or the descendants of Heth; also in verses 5, 7, 10, 16, 18 and 20

^b 11 Or sell

^c 15 That is, about 10 pounds

or about 4.6 kilograms

woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?"

⁶"Make sure that you do not take my son back there," Abraham said. ⁷"The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, 'To your offspring^a I will give this land' — he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. ⁸If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there." ⁹So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter.

¹⁰Then the servant left, taking with him ten of his master's camels loaded with all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim^b and made his way to the town of Nahor. ¹¹He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water.

¹²Then he prayed, "LORD, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. ¹³See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴May it be that when I say to a young woman, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too' — let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master."

¹⁵Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. ¹⁶The woman was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever slept with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and came up again.

¹⁷The servant hurried to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water from your jar."

¹⁸"Drink, my lord," she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink.

¹⁹After she had given him a drink, she said, "I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have had enough to drink." ²⁰So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. ²¹Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.

²²When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka^c and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels.^d ²³Then he asked, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

²⁴She answered him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milkah bore to Nahor." ²⁵And she added, "We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night."

²⁶Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD, ²⁷saying, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives."

²⁸The young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things. ²⁹Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he hurried out to the man at the spring. ³⁰As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. ³¹"Come, you who are blessed by the LORD," he said. "Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels."

^a 7 Or *seed* ^b 10 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

^d 22 That is, about 4 ounces or about 115 grams

^c 22 That is, about 1/5 ounce or about 5.7 grams

³²So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet. ³³Then food was set before him, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say."

"Then tell us," Laban said.

³⁴So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵The LORD has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. ³⁶My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns. ³⁷And my master made me swear an oath, and said, 'You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live, ³⁸but go to my father's family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.'

³⁹"Then I asked my master, 'What if the woman will not come back with me?'

⁴⁰"He replied, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked faithfully, will send his angel with you and make your journey a success, so that you can get a wife for my son from my own clan and from my father's family. ⁴¹You will be released from my oath if, when you go to my clan, they refuse to give her to you — then you will be released from my oath.'

⁴²"When I came to the spring today, I said, 'LORD, God of my master Abraham, if you will, please grant success to the journey on which I have come. ⁴³See, I am standing beside this spring. If a young woman comes out to draw water and I say to her, 'Please let me drink a little water from your jar,' ⁴⁴and if she says to me, 'Drink, and I'll draw water for your camels too,' let her be the one the LORD has chosen for my master's son.'

⁴⁵"Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, 'Please give me a drink.'

⁴⁶"She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too.' So I drank, and she watered the camels also.

⁴⁷"I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?'

"She said, 'The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milkah bore to him.'

"Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms, ⁴⁸and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's brother for his son. ⁴⁹Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn."

⁵⁰Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is from the LORD; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. ⁵¹Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has directed."

⁵²When Abraham's servant heard what they said, he bowed down to the ground before the LORD. ⁵³Then the servant brought out gold and silver jewelry and articles of clothing and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave costly gifts to her brother and to her mother. ⁵⁴Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night there.

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

⁵⁵But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the young woman remain with us ten days or so; then you^a may go."

⁵⁶But he said to them, "Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey. Send me on my way so I may go to my master."

⁵⁷Then they said, "Let's call the young woman and ask her about it." ⁵⁸So they called Rebekah and asked her, "Will you go with this man?"

"I will go," she said.

^a 55 Or *she*

⁵⁹So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰And they blessed Rebekah and said to her,

“Our sister, may you increase
to thousands upon thousands;
may your offspring possess
the cities of their enemies.”

⁶¹Then Rebekah and her attendants got ready and mounted the camels and went back with the man. So the servant took Rebekah and left.

⁶²Now Isaac had come from Beer Lahai Roi, for he was living in the Negev. ⁶³He went out to the field one evening to meditate,^a and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching. ⁶⁴Rebekah also looked up and saw Isaac. She got down from her camel ⁶⁵and asked the servant, “Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?”

“He is my master,” the servant answered. So she took her veil and covered herself.

⁶⁶Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. ⁶⁷Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

The Death of Abraham

25 Abraham had taken another wife, whose name was Keturah. ²She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. ³Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan were the Ashurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. ⁴The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanok, Abida and Eldaah. All these were descendants of Keturah.

⁵Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. ⁶But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.

⁷Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. ⁸Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people. ⁹His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, ¹⁰the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites.^b There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. ¹¹After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.

Ishmael's Sons

¹²This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's slave, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham.

¹³These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ¹⁴Mishma, Dumah, Massa, ¹⁵Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. ¹⁶These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps. ¹⁷Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people. ¹⁸His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt, as you go toward Ashur. And they lived in hostility toward^c all the tribes related to them.

Jacob and Esau

¹⁹This is the account of the family line of Abraham's son Isaac.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, ²⁰and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram^d and sister of Laban the Aramean.

²¹Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of

^a 63 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. *the east of* ^d 20 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

^b 10 Or *the descendants of Heth* ^c 18 Or *lived to*

his wife, because she was childless. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²²The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD.

²³The LORD said to her,

“Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples from within you
will be separated;
one people will be stronger than the
other,
and the older will serve the younger.”

²⁴When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau.^a ²⁶After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob.^b Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

²⁷The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was content to stay at home among the tents. ²⁸Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. ³⁰He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!” (That is why he was also called Edom.^c)

³¹Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.”

³²“Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?”

³³But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left.

So Esau despised his birthright.

Isaac and Abimelek

26 Now there was a famine in the land — besides the previous famine in Abraham’s time — and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. ²The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. ³Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring^d all nations on earth will be blessed,^e ⁵because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.” ⁶So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

⁷When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” because he was afraid to say, “She is my wife.” He thought, “The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.”

⁸When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelek king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. ⁹So Abimelek summoned Isaac and said, “She is really your wife! Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’?”

Isaac answered him, “Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.”

¹⁰Then Abimelek said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”

¹¹So Abimelek gave orders to all the people: “Anyone who harms this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

¹²Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. ¹³The man

^a 25 Esau may mean hairy. means red. ^d 4 Or seed (see 48:20)

^b 26 Jacob means he grasps the heel, a Hebrew idiom for he deceives.

^c 30 Edom

^e 4 Or and all nations on earth will use the name of your offspring in blessings



CHARACTER STUDY

MY NAME IS JACOB

GENESIS 25–32

Jacob was given a name predictive of his personality — its meaning: trickster. Early in life he set out to live up to his name. He tricked his twin brother Esau out of both his birthright and his blessing (see Genesis 25:27–34; 27:1–29). Esau's anger meant that Jacob had to flee for his life (see 27:41–28:9). Seeking shelter and ultimately a wife from his uncle Laban, the trickster was tricked. Jacob ended up in bondage to Laban, with *two* wives and a family filled with jealousy and resentment (see 29:15–30:24). Once again, Jacob tried to solve his problems through deceit and manipulation (see 30:25–42). And, for a period of time, it seemed to be working (see 30:43).

But soon Laban's sons complained that Jacob had grown rich at their father's expense. Jacob heard about their grumbling and also noted a change in Laban's attitude toward him (see 31:1–2). But fleeing could only mean going home. And going home meant facing Esau.

Jacob became very afraid when he heard that Esau was riding in his direction, accompanied by 400 men. He divided his own people and flocks into two groups, hoping that one of the two would survive Esau's wrath (see 32:1–8). Finally, as a last resort, Jacob turned to God for deliverance. He took his problems to God (see 32:9), he prayed in accordance with God's promises (see 32:9), he took a spiritual inventory (see 32:10), he sought God's strength at his own point of weakness (see 32:11), and he confidently claimed God's promises (see 32:12).

However, Jacob was still a schemer, and he put into motion a plan to bribe Esau (see 32:13–21). But God had a greater plan and Jacob ended up in a wrestling match with God (see 32:22–31). He wrestled all night and held on, even when it hurt (see 32:25), until he had received the Lord's blessing.

So Jacob had been touched powerfully by God, but he still had to face his brother Esau. But Esau ran to meet the one who had robbed him of his birthright and blessing. Rather than acting in vengeance, Esau embraced his brother, and the two of them wept together (see 33:4). The result was a pure product of God's grace. As if that were not enough, God chose Jacob to become the father of a nation destined to bring blessings to all people. His new destiny required a new name — Israel — which means, "he struggles with God."

In recovery, there will be steps along the way that we don't understand, steps that will cause us pain. We might even want to revert to our old patterns of lying and manipulation, of tricking others who are in our lives — even the people we love the most. But as long as we hold on tightly to God, even when it hurts, we can receive the blessings of freedom, reconciliation with God and healing from our hurts, hang-ups and habits.

As we cling desperately to God, there is for us, as there was for Jacob, the promise of a new name: "To the one who is victorious, I will give . . . a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it" (Revelation 2:17).

became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. ¹⁴He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. ¹⁵So all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth.

¹⁶Then Abimelek said to Isaac, "Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us."

¹⁷So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled. ¹⁸Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died, and he gave them the same names his father had given them.

¹⁹Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water there. ²⁰But the herders of Gerar quarreled with those of Isaac and said, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek,^a because they disputed with him. ²¹Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah.^b ²²He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth,^c saying, "Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land."

²³From there he went up to Beersheba. ²⁴That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."

²⁵Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.

²⁶Meanwhile, Abimelek had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces. ²⁷Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?"

²⁸They answered, "We saw clearly that

the LORD was with you; so we said, 'There ought to be a sworn agreement between us' — between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you ²⁹that you will do us no harm, just as we did not harm you but always treated you well and sent you away peacefully. And now you are blessed by the LORD."

³⁰Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. ³¹Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they went away peacefully.

³²That day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said, "We've found water!" ³³He called it Shibah,^d and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba.^e

Jacob Takes Esau's Blessing

³⁴When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. ³⁵They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

27 When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son."

"Here I am," he answered.

²Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. ³Now then, get your equipment — your quiver and bow — and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. ⁴Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die."

⁵Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, ⁶Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, ⁷'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I

^a 20 Esek means *dispute*. ^b 21 Sitnah means *opposition*. ^c 22 Rehoboth means *room*. ^d 33 Shibah can mean *oath* or *seven*. ^e 33 Beersheba can mean *well of the oath* and *well of seven*.

may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.’⁸ Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: ⁹Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. ¹⁰Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.”

¹¹Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin. ¹²What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.”

¹³His mother said to him, “My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.”

¹⁴So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. ¹⁵Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. ¹⁶She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goat-skins. ¹⁷Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made.

¹⁸He went to his father and said, “My father.”

“Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it?”

¹⁹Jacob said 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 give me your blessing.”

²⁰Isaac asked his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?”

“The LORD your God gave me success,” he replied.

²¹Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.”

²²Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” ²³He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he proceeded to bless him. ²⁴“Are you really my son Esau?” he asked.

“I am,” he replied.

²⁵Then he said, “My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.”

Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank.

²⁶Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come here, my son, and kiss me.”

²⁷So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of 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.

²⁸May God give you heaven’s dew
and earth’s richness —
an abundance of grain and new
wine.

²⁹May nations serve you
and peoples bow down to you.
Be lord over your brothers,
and may the sons of your mother
bow down to you.
May those who curse you be cursed
and those who bless you be blessed.”

³⁰After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father’s presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. ³¹He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, “My father, please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.”

³²His father Isaac asked him, “Who are you?”

“I am your son,” he answered, “your firstborn, Esau.”

³³Isaac trembled violently and said, “Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him — and indeed he will be blessed!”

³⁴When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me — me too, my father!”

³⁵But he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.”

³⁶Esau said, “Isn’t he rightly named Jacob^a? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he’s taken my blessing!” Then he asked, “Haven’t you reserved any blessing for me?”

³⁷Isaac answered Esau, “I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?”

³⁸Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!” Then Esau wept aloud.

³⁹His father Isaac answered him,

“Your dwelling will be
away from the earth’s richness,
away from the dew of heaven above.

⁴⁰You will live by the sword
and you will serve your brother.

But when you grow restless,
you will throw his yoke
from off your neck.”

6 ⁴¹Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.”

⁴²When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is planning to avenge himself by killing you. ⁴³Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Harran. ⁴⁴Stay with him for a while until your brother’s fury subsides. ⁴⁵When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I’ll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?”

⁴⁶Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I’m disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living.”

28 So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. Then he commanded him: “Do not marry a Canaanite woman. ²Go at once to Paddan Aram,^b to the house of your mother’s father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother. ³May God Almighty^c bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. ⁴May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.” ⁵Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

⁶Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, “Do not marry a Canaanite woman,” ⁷and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram. ⁸Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac; ⁹so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.

Jacob’s Dream at Bethel

¹⁰Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. ¹¹When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹²He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³There above it^d stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will

^a 36 *Jacob* means *he grasps the heel*, a Hebrew idiom for *he takes advantage of* or *he deceives*. ^b 2 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia; also in verses 5, 6 and 7 ^c 3 Hebrew *El-Shaddai* ^d 13 Or *There beside him*

give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^a ¹⁵I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

¹⁶When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” ¹⁷He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”

¹⁸Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹He called that place Bethel,^b though the city used to be called Luz.

²⁰Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear ²¹so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the LORD^c will be my God ²²and^d this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”

Jacob Arrives in Paddan Aram

29 Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples. ²There he saw a well in the open country, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. ³When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well’s mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well.

⁴Jacob asked the shepherds, “My brothers, where are you from?”

“We’re from Harran,” they replied.

⁵He said to them, “Do you know Laban, Nahor’s grandson?”

“Yes, we know him,” they answered.

⁶Then Jacob asked them, “Is he well?”

“Yes, he is,” they said, “and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep.”

⁷“Look,” he said, “the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture.”

⁸“We can’t,” they replied, “until all the flocks are gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we will water the sheep.”

⁹While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherd. ¹⁰When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of his uncle Laban, and Laban’s sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle’s sheep. ¹¹Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud. ¹²He had told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and a son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her father.

¹³As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister’s son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things. ¹⁴Then Laban said to him, “You are my own flesh and blood.”

Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, ¹⁵Laban said to him, “Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.”

¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷Leah had weak^e eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure

^a 14 Or will use your name and the name of your offspring in blessings (see 48:20) ^b 19 Bethel means house of God.
^c 20,21 Or Since God . . . father’s household, the LORD ^d 21,22 Or household, and the LORD will be my God, ²²then
^e 17 Or delicate

and was beautiful. ¹⁸Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, “I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.”

¹⁹Laban said, “It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.” ²⁰So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

²¹Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.”

²²So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. ²³But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. ²⁴And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

²⁵When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?”

²⁶Laban replied, “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. ²⁷Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.”

²⁸And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. ²⁹Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. ³⁰Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

Jacob’s Children

³¹When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless. ³²Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben,^a for she said, “It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now.”

³³She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.” So she named him Simeon.^b

³⁴Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” So he was named Levi.^c

³⁵She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” So she named him Judah.^d Then she stopped having children.

30 When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!”

²Jacob became angry with her and said, “Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?”

³Then she said, “Here is Bilhah, my servant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and I too can build a family through her.”

⁴So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, ⁵and she became pregnant and bore him a son. ⁶Then Rachel said, “God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son.” Because of this she named him Dan.^e

⁷Rachel’s servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸Then Rachel said, “I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won.” So she named him Naphtali.^f

⁹When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰Leah’s servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹Then Leah said, “What good fortune!”^g So she named him Gad.^h

¹²Leah’s servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³Then Leah said, “How happy I

^a 32 *Reuben* sounds like the Hebrew for *he has seen my misery*; the name means *see, a son*. ^b 33 *Simeon* probably means *one who hears*. ^c 34 *Levi* sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *attached*. ^d 35 *Judah* sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *praise*. ^e 6 *Dan* here means *he has vindicated*. ^f 8 *Naphtali* means *my struggle*. ^g 11 Or “*A troop is coming!*” ^h 11 *Gad* can mean *good fortune* or *a troop*.

am! The women will call me happy.” So she named him Asher.^a

¹⁴During wheat harvest, Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants, which he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.”

¹⁵But she said to her, “Wasn’t it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son’s mandrakes too?”

“Very well,” Rachel said, “he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son’s mandrakes.”

¹⁶So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. “You must sleep with me,” she said. “I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” So he slept with her that night.

¹⁷God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸Then Leah said, “God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband.” So she named him Issachar.^b

¹⁹Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. ²⁰Then Leah said, “God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons.” So she named him Zebulun.^c

²¹Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²²Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and enabled her to conceive. ²³She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, “God has taken away my disgrace.” ²⁴She named him Joseph,^d and said, “May the LORD add to me another son.”

Jacob’s Flocks Increase

²⁵After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland. ²⁶Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I’ve done for you.”

²⁷But Laban said to him, “If I have

found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you.” ²⁸He added, “Name your wages, and I will pay them.”

²⁹Jacob said to him, “You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care. ³⁰The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?”

³¹“What shall I give you?” he asked.

“Don’t give me anything,” Jacob replied. “But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: ³²Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages. ³³And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen.”

³⁴“Agreed,” said Laban. “Let it be as you have said.” ³⁵That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons. ³⁶Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban’s flocks.

³⁷Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. ³⁸Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, ³⁹they mated in front of the

^a 13 Asher means happy. ^b 18 Issachar sounds like the Hebrew for reward. ^c 20 Zebulun probably means honor. ^d 24 Joseph means may he add.

branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. ⁴⁰Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals. ⁴¹Whenever the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches, ⁴²but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob. ⁴³In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

Jacob Flees From Laban

31 Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father." ²And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.

³Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

⁴So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were. ⁵He said to them, "I see that your father's attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me. ⁶You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength, ⁷yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me. ⁸If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked young. ⁹So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me.

¹⁰"In breeding season I once had a

dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted. ¹¹The angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob.' I answered, 'Here I am.' ¹²And he said, 'Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. ¹³I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.'"

¹⁴Then Rachel and Leah replied, "Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father's estate? ¹⁵Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us. ¹⁶Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you."

¹⁷Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, ¹⁸and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram,^a to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

¹⁹When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods. ²⁰Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away. ²¹So he fled with all he had, crossed the Euphrates River, and headed for the hill country of Gilead.

Laban Pursues Jacob

²²On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. ²³Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁴Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."

²⁵Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too. ²⁶Then Laban said to Jacob,

^a 18 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

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“What have you done? You’ve deceived me, and you’ve carried off my daughters like captives in war. ²⁷Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn’t you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of timbrels and harps? ²⁸You didn’t even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye. You have done a foolish thing. ²⁹I have the power to harm you; but last night the God of your father said to me, ‘Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.’ ³⁰Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father’s household. But why did you steal my gods?”

³¹Jacob answered Laban, “I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. ³²But if you find anyone who has your gods, that person shall not live. In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it.” Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.

³³So Laban went into Jacob’s tent and into Leah’s tent and into the tent of the two female servants, but he found nothing. After he came out of Leah’s tent, he entered Rachel’s tent. ³⁴Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them inside her camel’s saddle and was sitting on them. Laban searched through everything in the tent but found nothing.

³⁵Rachel said to her father, “Don’t be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence; I’m having my period.” So he searched but could not find the household gods.

³⁶Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. “What is my crime?” he asked Laban. “How have I wronged you that you hunt me down? ³⁷Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine, and let them judge between the two of us.

³⁸“I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not mis-carried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. ³⁹I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night. ⁴⁰This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. ⁴¹It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times. ⁴²If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you.”

⁴³Laban answered Jacob, “The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. All you see is mine. Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne? ⁴⁴Come now, let’s make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us.”

⁴⁵So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. ⁴⁶He said to his relatives, “Gather some stones.” So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap. ⁴⁷Laban called it *Jegar Sahadutha*, and Jacob called it *Galeed*.^a

⁴⁸Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” That is why it was called *Galeed*. ⁴⁹It was also called *Mizpah*,^b because he said, “May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other. ⁵⁰If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me.”

⁵¹Laban also said to Jacob, “Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set up

^a 47 The Aramaic *Jegar Sahadutha* and the Hebrew *Galeed* both mean *witness heap*. ^b 49 *Mizpah* means *watchtower*.

between you and me. ⁵²This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me. ⁵³May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.”

So Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac. ⁵⁴He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there.

⁵⁵Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.^a

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

32^b Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. ²When Jacob saw them, he said, “This is the camp of God!” So he named that place Mahanaim.^c

³Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. ⁴He instructed them: “This is what you are to say to my lord Esau: ‘Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. ⁵I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, male and female servants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.’”

⁶When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, “We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.”

⁷In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups,^d and the flocks and herds and camels as well. ⁸He thought, “If Esau comes and attacks one group,^e the group^e that is left may escape.”

⁹Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, LORD, you who said to me, ‘Go back to

your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,’ ¹⁰I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two camps. ¹¹Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. ¹²But you have said, ‘I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.’”

¹³He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau: ¹⁴two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. ¹⁶He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, “Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds.”

¹⁷He instructed the one in the lead: “When my brother Esau meets you and asks, ‘Who do you belong to, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?’ ¹⁸then you are to say, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.’”

¹⁹He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: “You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him. ²⁰And be sure to say, ‘Your servant Jacob is coming behind us.’” For he thought, “I will pacify him with these gifts I am sending on ahead; later, when I see him, perhaps he will receive me.” ²¹So Jacob’s gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp.

Jacob Wrestles With God

²²That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his

^a 55 In Hebrew texts this verse (31:55) is numbered 32:1.

^b In Hebrew texts 32:1-32 is numbered 32:2-33.

^c 2 Mahanaim means two camps. ^d 7 Or camps ^e 8 Or camp

eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jab-bok. ²³After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. ²⁴So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. ²⁶Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak."

But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

²⁷The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

²⁸Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel,^a because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

²⁹Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel,^b saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

³¹The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel,^c and he was limping because of his hip. ³²Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon.

Jacob Meets Esau

33 Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. ²He put the female servants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. ³He himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother.

⁴But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.

⁵Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. "Who are these with you?" he asked.

Jacob answered, "They are the children God has graciously given your servant."

⁶Then the female servants and their children approached and bowed down. ⁷Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down.

⁸Esau asked, "What's the meaning of all these flocks and herds I met?"

"To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said.

⁹But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself."

¹⁰"No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. ¹¹Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it.

¹²Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you."

¹³But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. ¹⁴So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the flocks and herds before me and the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."

¹⁵Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you."

"But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord."

¹⁶So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. ¹⁷Jacob, however, went to Sukkoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Sukkoth.^d

¹⁸After Jacob came from Paddan Aram,^e

^a 28 *Israel* probably means *he struggles with God*.
variant of *Peniel*

^b 30 *Peniel* means *face of God*.

^c 31 Hebrew *Penuel*, a

^d 17 *Sukkoth* means *shelters*.

^e 18 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

My Name Is Kenny

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH ALCOHOLISM
AND DRUG ADDICTION

Please read about Jacob's preparations to meet Esau, his wrestling with God and the ultimate reunion between the estranged twin brothers in Genesis 32 – 33.

I grew up with my mother, stepfather and brother. My mother and I were close, but my stepfather ruled with an iron fist, expecting things to be done on command and with complete obedience. From early on I learned to walk on eggshells. I went to public school, excelled at sports and found acceptance.

When I was 15 years old, my mother and stepfather divorced, and I immediately began to rebel. I took a job at a local liquor store as a stock boy, and before long I'd figured out a way to steal 12-packs of beer. Slowly but surely school and sports became less a priority. As my addiction progressed, I began getting in trouble with the law. Before my eighteenth birthday I'd been arrested five times: twice for being drunk and belligerent, twice for DUI and once for assault and battery. That same year I was involved in an affair with a married woman, resulting in her divorce. I dropped out of high school in my senior year to begin my career in construction.

I started using methamphetamine and, for a few years, speed worked for me. But as my addiction progressed, I became isolated and began to lose jobs. To feed my ever-increasing addiction, I resorted to stealing and manipulation. I had become the "trickster." My mother had acquired an expensive stamp collection from my grandfather, and I began to steal from her piece by piece; I finally resorted to pawning off her diamond rings. When she realized what I was doing, she was forced to kick me out.

I was now homeless and jobless. Over the next two years I was arrested twice: for possession and for being under the influence. I received a sentence of 45 days in the county jail. Upon my release, my mom graciously allowed me back home. During this time she began attending Saddleback Church. One Sunday she filled out a visitor card with my name, indicating that I wanted to know Christ. The trickster had been tricked.

A person is walking away from the camera on a beach at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, orange and pink clouds. In the background, there are mountains and a body of water. The overall tone is warm and reflective.

Shortly thereafter I received a call from a man involved with the new believer's ministry. Not knowing how else to respond, I cooperated with him. Finally, he asked whether I would be willing to say the sinners' prayer. I shared with him that I wasn't ready and that I was struggling with drugs and alcohol. I didn't want to be a hypocrite. He told me about Celebrate Recovery, and the seed was planted. The next Friday I walked into a Celebrate Recovery meeting for the first time. That evening I met some great guys and accepted the Lord.

I began to work at a friend's family patio store. Unfortunately, I was still a schemer, and, like Jacob, I ended up in a wrestling match with God. I disappeared from church and cut off contact with my accountability partners. Not surprisingly, I relapsed. This most miserable and lonely time of my life came to an end when I was arrested nine months later for the last time.

This time I was sentenced to six months in the county jail. I was court ordered to attend an AIDS awareness class and given an HIV blood test. The instructor advised us that no news from them would be good news. Two weeks later the guards handed me a medical slip labeled "Blood Test" in bold red letters. I realized with a sinking heart that I was HIV positive. I was terrified, feeling, as Jacob did, that 400 potentially menacing men were closing in on me. While sitting in the medical facility with tears streaming down my face, I reflected back on my whole life; all of those years of scheming and striving, and for what? My past had caught up with me. I could no longer run from the consequences of the pain I'd caused everyone, including myself, by my thoughtless choices.

I was finally called in and told that there had been a mistake, a computer error. I wasn't HIV positive after all. I realized that this could all too easily have gone the other way, and I knew at that moment that I had to change everything in my life.

Upon my release, I connected with a sponsor right away and started accepting direction from him. The first night back at Celebrate Recovery I was greeted by Big Al with one of his bear hugs. The unconditional love I felt that night gave me the strength to come back. I found encouragement through my sponsor, the Tuesday night Step Study, the Friday night Open Share groups and the awesome fellowship. God restored my relationship with my mother, father and stepfather and later blessed me with a beautiful, godly wife.

I'm often still afraid but hold on tightly to God even when the process hurts, because that's the path to healing. Through all of this, I've come to know the most compassionate and forgiving Father a man could ever hope for.

In an almost unbelievable, graphic example of God's grace, "Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept" (Genesis 33:4).

Kenny

he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. ¹⁹For a hundred pieces of silver,^a he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. ²⁰There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel.^b

Dinah and the Shechemites

34 Now Dinah, the daughter Leah had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the women of the land. ²When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and raped her. ³His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the young woman and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴And Shechem said to his father Hamor, “Get me this girl as my wife.”

⁵When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; so he did nothing about it until they came home.

⁶Then Shechem’s father Hamor went out to talk with Jacob. ⁷Meanwhile, Jacob’s sons had come in from the fields as soon as they heard what had happened. They were shocked and furious, because Shechem had done an outrageous thing in^c Israel by sleeping with Jacob’s daughter — a thing that should not be done.

⁸But Hamor said to them, “My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife. ⁹Intermarry with us; give us your daughters and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰You can settle among us; the land is open to you. Live in it, trade^d in it, and acquire property in it.”

¹¹Then Shechem said to Dinah’s father and brothers, “Let me find favor in your eyes, and I will give you whatever you ask. ¹²Make the price for the bride and the gift I am to bring as great as you like, and I’ll pay whatever you ask me. Only give me the young woman as my wife.”

¹³Because their sister Dinah had been defiled, Jacob’s sons replied deceitfully as they spoke to Shechem and his father Hamor. ¹⁴They said to them, “We can’t do such a thing; we can’t give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁵We will enter into an agreement with you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males. ¹⁶Then we will give you our daughters and take your daughters for ourselves. We’ll settle among you and become one people with you. ¹⁷But if you will not agree to be circumcised, we’ll take our sister and go.”

¹⁸Their proposal seemed good to Hamor and his son Shechem. ¹⁹The young man, who was the most honored of all his father’s family, lost no time in doing what they said, because he was delighted with Jacob’s daughter. ²⁰So Hamor and his son Shechem went to the gate of their city to speak to the men of their city. ²¹“These men are friendly toward us,” they said. “Let them live in our land and trade in it; the land has plenty of room for them. We can marry their daughters and they can marry ours. ²²But the men will agree to live with us as one people only on the condition that our males be circumcised, as they themselves are. ²³Won’t their livestock, their property and all their other animals become ours? So let us agree to their terms, and they will settle among us.”

²⁴All the men who went out of the city gate agreed with Hamor and his son Shechem, and every male in the city was circumcised.

²⁵Three days later, while all of them were still in pain, two of Jacob’s sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, took their swords and attacked the unsuspecting city, killing every male. ²⁶They put Hamor and his son Shechem to the sword and took Dinah from Shechem’s house and left. ²⁷The sons of Jacob came upon the dead bodies and looted the city where^e their sister had

^a 19 Hebrew *hundred kesitahs*; a kesitah was a unit of money of unknown weight and value. ^b 20 *El Elohe Israel* can mean *El is the God of Israel* or *mighty is the God of Israel*. ^c 7 Or *against* ^d 10 Or *move about freely*; also in verse 21 ^e 27 Or *because*



CHARACTER STUDY

MY NAME IS ESAU

GENESIS 33

Esau's life was marred by family struggle, beginning already when his "younger" twin brother and rival-to-be was born grasping his heel (see Genesis 25:26). Esau is often presented as a fool. He certainly made a snap decision in trading his inheritance for a bowl of stew (see 25:29–34) and later grieved both his parents by marrying two pagan Hittite women (see 26:34–35; 27:46). But Esau was also robbed of the firstborn's blessing by his devious brother, who conspired with his own mother (see 27:1–29). This tragic account reflects a home with a fatal flaw. Each parent had a favorite son, and in both cases their selection was based on personal preferences (see 25:27–28). The lack of mutual love and respect between the parents is especially glaring in Rebekah's deception of her own husband. The theft of his blessing led Esau to swear, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob" (27:41). Jacob, at Mom's direction, fled for his life to his uncle in faraway Haran (see 27:42–45).

As Jacob at long last traveled back home from the north, he both plotted and prayed, fearful of facing Esau (see 32:1–33:3). But to Jacob's relief he found a brother who had recovered from his hatred and had set aside his drive to retaliate. Esau hugged and kissed Jacob and wept with him over their separation and reunion (see 33:1–5). Esau had learned to forgive and, in so doing, he recovered a brother and a friend. Although Esau wanted nothing in payment from Jacob, this formerly rash young man now had the grace to accept a gift anyway (see 33:8–12). He was reconciled to Jacob and respected by his brother's family (see 33:6–7).

Hanging on to bitterness, refusing to forgive what is past, can prevent us from enjoying God's provision in the present. Esau had made foolish decisions. But he had also been grievously wronged. Yet somewhere along the way he had found the wisdom and grace to let go of his past. We need to do the same in our recovery. What's done is done. We may have been wronged by members of our own family. But bitterness only prolongs our suffering. An unforgiving spirit builds barriers that isolate us from the love we could otherwise be enjoying. As God's children, each of us is commanded to "be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). God's pardon to us was unconditional, and we too are to forgive without reservation. Setting aside our right to assign blame can bring reconciliation with others and healing to our own hearts.

Esau was willing to take his eyes off Jacob, look around at what God had given him, and announce that he already had plenty (see 33:9). We need to take a cue from Esau: We need to lay aside bitterness and take an unobstructed look at our own blessings.

been defiled.²⁸ They seized their flocks and herds and donkeys and everything else of theirs in the city and out in the fields.²⁹ They carried off all their wealth and all their women and children, taking as plunder everything in the houses.

³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have brought trouble on me by making me obnoxious to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed.”

³¹ But they replied, “Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?”

Jacob Returns to Bethel

35 Then God said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes.”³ Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.”⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.⁵ Then they set out, and the terror of God fell on the towns all around them so that no one pursued them.

⁶ Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz (that is, Bethel) in the land of Canaan.⁷ There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel,^a because it was there that God revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother.

⁸ Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died and was buried under the oak outside Bethel. So it was named Allon Bakuth.^b

⁹ After Jacob returned from Paddan Aram,^c God appeared to him again and blessed him.¹⁰ God said to him, “Your name is Jacob,^d but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel.^e” So he named him Israel.

¹¹ And God said to him, “I am God Almighty^f; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants.”¹² The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you.”¹³ Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

¹⁴ Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.¹⁵ Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel.^g

The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

¹⁶ Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty.¹⁷ And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, “Don’t despair, for you have another son.”¹⁸ As she breathed her last — for she was dying — she named her son Ben-Oni.^h But his father named him Benjamin.ⁱ

¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).²⁰ Over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar, and to this day that pillar marks Rachel’s tomb.

²¹ Israel moved on again and pitched his tent beyond Migdal Eder.²² While Israel was living in that region, Reuben went in and slept with his father’s concubine Bilhah, and Israel heard of it.

Jacob had twelve sons:

²³ The sons of Leah:

^a 7 El Bethel means *God of Bethel*. ^b 8 Allon Bakuth means *oak of weeping*. ^c 9 That is, Northwest

Mesopotamia; also in verse 26 ^d 10 Jacob means *he grasps the heel*, a Hebrew idiom for *he deceives*. ^e 10 Israel probably means *he struggles with God*. ^f 11 Hebrew *El-Shaddai* ^g 15 Bethel means *house of God*. ^h 18 Ben-Oni means *son of my trouble*. ⁱ 18 Benjamin means *son of my right hand*.

Reuben the firstborn of Jacob,
Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and
Zebulun.

²⁴The sons of Rachel:

Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁵The sons of Rachel's servant Bilhah:

Dan and Naphtali.

²⁶The sons of Leah's servant Zilpah:

Gad and Asher.

These were the sons of Jacob, who were
born to him in Paddan Aram.

²⁷Jacob came home to his father Isaac
in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is,
Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had
stayed. ²⁸Isaac lived a hundred and eighty
years. ²⁹Then he breathed his last and died
and was gathered to his people, old and full
of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob bur-
ied him.

Esau's Descendants

36 This is the account of the fam-
ily line of Esau (that is, Edom).

²Esau took his wives from the
women of Canaan: Adah daughter
of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah
daughter of Anah and granddaughter
of Zibeon the Hivite — ³also Base-
math daughter of Ishmael and sister
of Nebaioth.

⁴Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Bas-
emath bore Reuel, ⁵and Oholibamah
bore Jeush, Jalam and Korah. These
were the sons of Esau, who were born
to him in Canaan.

⁶Esau took his wives and sons and
daughters and all the members of his
household, as well as his livestock
and all his other animals and all the
goods he had acquired in Canaan,
and moved to a land some distance
from his brother Jacob. ⁷Their pos-
sessions were too great for them to
remain together; the land where they
were staying could not support them

both because of their livestock. ⁸So
Esau (that is, Edom) settled in the hill
country of Seir.

⁹This is the account of the family line of
Esau the father of the Edomites in the hill
country of Seir.

¹⁰These are the names of Esau's sons:

Eliphaz, the son of Esau's wife
Adah, and Reuel, the son of Esau's
wife Basemath.

¹¹The sons of Eliphaz:

Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam and
Kenaz.

¹²Esau's son Eliphaz also had a con-
cubine named Timna, who bore
him Amalek. These were grand-
sons of Esau's wife Adah.

¹³The sons of Reuel:

Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and
Mizzah. These were grandsons of
Esau's wife Basemath.

¹⁴The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah
daughter of Anah and granddaughter
of Zibeon, whom she bore to Esau:

Jeush, Jalam and Korah.

¹⁵These were the chiefs among Esau's
descendants:

The sons of Eliphaz the firstborn of
Esau:

Chiefs Teman, Omar, Zepho, Ke-
naz, ¹⁶Korah,^a Gatam and Amalek.
These were the chiefs descended
from Eliphaz in Edom; they were
grandsons of Adah.

¹⁷The sons of Esau's son Reuel:

Chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah
and Mizzah. These were the chiefs
descended from Reuel in Edom;
they were grandsons of Esau's wife
Basemath.

¹⁸The sons of Esau's wife Oholibamah:

Chiefs Jeush, Jalam and Korah.
These were the chiefs descend-
ed from Esau's wife Oholibamah
daughter of Anah.

^a 16 Masoretic Text; Samaritan Pentateuch (also verse 11 and 1 Chron. 1:36) does not have *Korah*.

My Name Is Bill

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS AND CODEPENDENCY

Please read in Genesis 33 the account of the harmonious reunion between Esau and his brother, Jacob, who had years earlier so grievously wronged him.

"Can't you do anything right?" "What's wrong with you?" "I wish you'd never been born." The seeds of shame were sown and repeatedly fertilized throughout my youth. My dad was an abusive alcoholic, a man in pain. In his confused evaluation I was bad, unworthy of his love and utterly displeasing to him. When he died I didn't cry—not because I didn't care, but because I'd been taught that a man doesn't cry. I became the man of the house, a surrogate husband for my mom and a surrogate dad for my brother. I began to resent this emotional connection with my mom, and this carried over into my relationships with all other women.

At about this time a confusing thing happened to me: I was sexually abused by a woman in her 30s. My feelings were conflicted, though, because it felt good but I also felt damaged and ashamed. I had no one to turn to, not even God. Growing up, I'd been taught to be afraid of God, knowing that I could never achieve his impossible standards of perfection. Since I'd been made to believe from the outset that I was a mistake, my self-image became performance-based; whatever value I may have had came from *what* I did, not from *who* I was. At times, even today, I still fight that all-too-familiar battle.

I excelled as a student in academics and as an adult in work, all the while seeking drugs, sex and self-made pornographic movies as an escape. One morning I found a note from my wife. She stated simply that she couldn't "do this" anymore and proceeded to leave both me and my son behind. The ordeal crushed my heart. I resented my mom for the emotional abuse and now my wife for abandoning me. I became a man trapped in a catch-22: I hated women but couldn't live without them.

I wandered for many years in an emotional wasteland before finally hitting the wall. I lost my career, my financial well-being and my perceived ability to control my own life. It was then that my story shifted. God allowed Leslie, my wife now of 15 years, to lead me to the Lord.

Through her loving and patient intervention I became a new creation in Christ. But that was only the start of the process, not the end. I was still struggling with the poisonous influence of all the junk I had accumulated in my life. I grappled endlessly with the pervasive question *why*. I wept and cursed at God — and he responded by allowing me to see precisely what I needed, right there in the midst of all my pain. I needed to reduce the size of my rearview mirror. I needed to heal. I needed to understand why I was perpetually abusing the woman I loved more than life itself. I needed to get in touch with my feelings, to deal with the abuse I had endured in an appropriate manner — not in a way that continued to hurt my wife and others. I needed to forgive and to let God take control. I submitted myself to the process of recovery through the Celebrate Recovery program. It was hard, painful work, and at times it still is. But the results over time tell the story: Nothing is beyond repair — *nothing*.

My life had been one of struggle, much like Esau's. I had made foolish decisions and allowed my pain to turn into anger that was directed at others. In Genesis 33 Esau, who had been so wronged, demonstrated without words that he had found forgiveness in his heart and recovery from his hatred (see Genesis 33:1–5). Like him, I have truly learned to forgive, neither expecting nor wanting anything in return (see vv. 8–12). There's no doubt that I had every "reason" to retaliate, but instead, through the intervention of Celebrate Recovery, I've asked God to forgive my deceitful heart. I've managed with the Holy Spirit's help to let go of my past. I thank God daily for the gift of forgiveness because nothing less could have brought reconciliation into my life and healing to my heart.

Bill

¹⁹These were the sons of Esau (that is, Edom), and these were their chiefs.

²⁰These were the sons of Seir the Horite, who were living in the region:

Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ²¹Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These sons of Seir in Edom were Horite chiefs.

²²The sons of Lotan:

Hori and Homam.^a Timna was Lotan's sister.

²³The sons of Shobal:

Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho and Onam.

²⁴The sons of Zibeon:

Aiah and Anah. This is the Anah who discovered the hot springs^b in the desert while he was grazing the donkeys of his father Zibeon.

²⁵The children of Anah:

Dishon and Oholibamah daughter of Anah.

²⁶The sons of Dishon:

Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran and Keran.

²⁷The sons of Ezer:

Bilhan, Zaavan and Akan.

²⁸The sons of Dishan:

Uz and Aran.

²⁹These were the Horite chiefs:

Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, ³⁰Dishon, Ezer and Dishan. These were the Horite chiefs, according to their divisions, in the land of Seir.

The Rulers of Edom

³¹These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned:

³²Bela son of Beor became king of Edom. His city was named Dinhabah.

³³When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah from Bozrah succeeded him as king.

³⁴When Jobab died, Husham from the

land of the Temanites succeeded him as king.

³⁵When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, succeeded him as king. His city was named Avith.

³⁶When Hadad died, Samlah from Masrekah succeeded him as king.

³⁷When Samlah died, Shaul from Rehoboth on the river succeeded him as king.

³⁸When Shaul died, Baal-Hanan son of Akbor succeeded him as king.

³⁹When Baal-Hanan son of Akbor died, Hadad^d succeeded him as king. His city was named Pau, and his wife's name was Mehetabel daughter of Matred, the daughter of Me-Zahab.

⁴⁰These were the chiefs descended from Esau, by name, according to their clans and regions:

Timna, Alvah, Jetheth, ⁴¹Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁴²Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁴³Magdiel and Iram. These were the chiefs of Edom, according to their settlements in the land they occupied.

This is the family line of Esau, the father of the Edomites.

Joseph's Dreams

37 Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan.

²This is the account of Jacob's family line.

Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born

^a 22 Hebrew *Hemam*, a variant of *Homam* (see 1 Chron. 1:39) ^b 24 Vulgate; Syriac *discovered water*; the meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. ^c 26 Hebrew *Dishan*, a variant of *Dishon* ^d 39 Many manuscripts of the Masoretic Text, Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac (see also 1 Chron. 1:50); most manuscripts of the Masoretic Text *Hadar*

to him in his old age; and he made an ornate^a robe for him. ⁴When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.

⁵Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had: ⁷We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.”

⁸His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said.

⁹Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. “Listen,” he said, “I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.”

¹⁰When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?” ¹¹His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.

Joseph Sold by His Brothers

¹²Now his brothers had gone to graze their father’s flocks near Shechem, ¹³and Israel said to Joseph, “As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them.”

“Very well,” he replied.

¹⁴So he said to him, “Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me.” Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron.

When Joseph arrived at Shechem, ^{15a}a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, “What are you looking for?”

¹⁶He replied, “I’m looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they are grazing their flocks?”

¹⁷“They have moved on from here,” the man answered. “I heard them say, ‘Let’s go to Dothan.’”

So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. ¹⁸But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.

¹⁹“Here comes that dreamer!” they said to each other. ²⁰“Come now, let’s kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we’ll see what comes of his dreams.”

²¹When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. “Let’s not take his life,” he said. ²²“Don’t shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him.” Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father.

²³So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe—the ornate robe he was wearing—²⁴and they took him and threw him into the cistern. The cistern was empty; there was no water in it.

²⁵As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt.

²⁶Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed.

²⁸So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels^b of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

²⁹When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore

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^a 3 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain; also in verses 23 and 32. ^b 28 That is, about 8 ounces or about 230 grams

his clothes. ³⁰He went back to his brothers and said, “The boy isn’t there! Where can I turn now?”

³¹Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. ³²They took the ornate robe back to their father and said, “We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe.”

³³He recognized it and said, “It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.”

³⁴Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “No,” he said, “I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave.” So his father wept for him.

³⁶Meanwhile, the Midianites^a sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard.

Judah and Tamar

38 At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah. ²There Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. He married her and made love to her; ³she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, who was named Er. ⁴She conceived again and gave birth to a son and named him Onan. ⁵She gave birth to still another son and named him Shelah. It was at Kezib that she gave birth to him.

⁶Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷But Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the LORD’s sight; so the LORD put him to death.

⁸Then Judah said to Onan, “Sleep with your brother’s wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to raise up offspring for your brother.” ⁹But Onan knew that the child would not be his; so whenever he slept with his brother’s wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from providing offspring for his brother. ¹⁰What he

did was wicked in the LORD’s sight; so the LORD put him to death also.

¹¹Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, “Live as a widow in your father’s household until my son Shelah grows up.” For he thought, “He may die too, just like his brothers.” So Tamar went to live in her father’s household.

¹²After a long time Judah’s wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah, to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went with him.

¹³When Tamar was told, “Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep,” ¹⁴she took off her widow’s clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife.

¹⁵When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, “Come now, let me sleep with you.”

“And what will you give me to sleep with you?” she asked.

¹⁷“I’ll send you a young goat from my flock,” he said.

“Will you give me something as a pledge until you send it?” she asked.

¹⁸He said, “What pledge should I give you?”

“Your seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand,” she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. ¹⁹After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow’s clothes again.

²⁰Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get his pledge back from the woman, but he did not find her. ²¹He asked the men who lived there, “Where is the shrine prostitute who was beside the road at Enaim?”

^a 36 Samaritan Pentateuch, Septuagint, Vulgate and Syriac (see also verse 28); Masoretic Text *Medianites*

“There hasn’t been any shrine prostitute here,” they said.

²²So he went back to Judah and said, “I didn’t find her. Besides, the men who lived there said, ‘There hasn’t been any shrine prostitute here.’”

²³Then Judah said, “Let her keep what she has, or we will become a laughingstock. After all, I did send her this young goat, but you didn’t find her.”

²⁴About three months later Judah was told, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant.”

Judah said, “Bring her out and have her burned to death!”

²⁵As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. “I am pregnant by the man who owns these,” she said. And she added, “See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are.”

²⁶Judah recognized them and said, “She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn’t give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not sleep with her again.

²⁷When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb.

²⁸As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, “This one came out first.” ²⁹But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, “So this is how you have broken out!” And he was named Perez.^a

³⁰Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out. And he was named Zerah.^b

Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife

39 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.

²The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his

Egyptian master. ³When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, ⁴Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. ⁵From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. ⁶So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph’s care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.

Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, ⁷and after a while his master’s wife took notice of Joseph and said, “Come to bed with me!”

⁸But he refused. “With me in charge,” he told her, “my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. ⁹No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” ¹⁰And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.

¹¹One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. ¹²She caught him by his cloak and said, “Come to bed with me!” But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

¹³When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, ¹⁴she called her household servants. “Look,” she said to them, “this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed. ¹⁵When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.”

¹⁶She kept his cloak beside her until his

^a 29 Perez means *breaking out*.

^b 30 Zerah can mean *scarlet* or *brightness*.

master came home. ¹⁷Then she told him this story: “That Hebrew slave you brought us came to me to make sport of me. ¹⁸But as soon as I screamed for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house.”

¹⁹When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, “This is how your slave treated me,” he burned with anger. ²⁰Joseph’s master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king’s prisoners were confined.

But while Joseph was there in the prison, ²¹the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden. ²²So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. ²³The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.

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The Cupbearer and the Baker

40 Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. ²Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, ³and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined. ⁴The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them.

After they had been in custody for some time, ⁵each of the two men — the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison — had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own.

⁶When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. ⁷So he asked Pharaoh’s officials who were in custody with him in his master’s house, “Why do you look so sad today?”

⁸“We both had dreams,” they answered, “but there is no one to interpret them.”

Then Joseph said to them, “Do not in-

terpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.”

⁹So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, “In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, ¹⁰and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. ¹¹Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup and put the cup in his hand.”

¹²“This is what it means,” Joseph said to him. “The three branches are three days. ¹³Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. ¹⁵I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.”

¹⁶When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, “I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread.^a ¹⁷In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.”

¹⁸“This is what it means,” Joseph said. “The three baskets are three days. ¹⁹Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and impale your body on a pole. And the birds will eat away your flesh.”

²⁰Now the third day was Pharaoh’s birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: ²¹He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into Pharaoh’s hand — ²²but he impaled the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation.

²³The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him.

^a 16 Or three wicker baskets

Pharaoh's Dreams

41 When two full years had passed, Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, ²when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. ³After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. ⁴And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up.

⁵He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. ⁶After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted — thin and scorched by the east wind. ⁷The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream.

⁸In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

⁹Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, “Today I am reminded of my shortcomings. ¹⁰Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. ¹¹Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. ¹²Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. ¹³And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was impaled.”

¹⁴So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh.

¹⁵Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.”

¹⁶“I cannot do it,” Joseph replied to Pharaoh, “but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires.”

¹⁷Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “In my dream I was standing on the bank of the Nile, ¹⁸when out of the river there came up seven cows, fat and sleek, and they grazed among the reeds. ¹⁹After them, seven other cows came up — scrawny and very ugly and lean. I had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰The lean, ugly cows ate up the seven fat cows that came up first. ²¹But even after they ate them, no one could tell that they had done so; they looked just as ugly as before. Then I woke up.

²²“In my dream I saw seven heads of grain, full and good, growing on a single stalk. ²³After them, seven other heads sprouted — withered and thin and scorched by the east wind. ²⁴The thin heads of grain swallowed up the seven good heads. I told this to the magicians, but none of them could explain it to me.”

²⁵Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁶The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. ²⁷The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine.

²⁸“It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. ²⁹Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, ³⁰but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. ³¹The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. ³²The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

³³“And now let Pharaoh look for a

discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. ³⁴Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. ³⁵They should collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. ³⁶This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine.”

³⁷The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. ³⁸So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God^a?”

³⁹Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you.”

Joseph in Charge of Egypt

⁴¹So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” ⁴²Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger. He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command,^b and people shouted before him, “Make way^c!” Thus he put him in charge of the whole land of Egypt.

⁴⁴Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.” ⁴⁵Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On,^d to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

⁴⁶Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of

Egypt. And Joseph went out from Pharaoh’s presence and traveled throughout Egypt. ⁴⁷During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. ⁴⁸Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. ⁴⁹Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure.

⁵⁰Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. ⁵¹Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh^e and said, “It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.” ⁵²The second son he named Ephraim^f and said, “It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering.”

⁵³The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. ⁵⁵When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.”

⁵⁶When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. ⁵⁷And all the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe everywhere.

Joseph’s Brothers Go to Egypt

42 When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?” ²He continued, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.”

^a 38 Or of the gods ^b 43 Or in the chariot of his second-in-command; or in his second chariot ^c 43 Or Bow down ^d 45 That is, Heliopolis; also in verse 50 ^e 51 Manasseh sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for forget. ^f 52 Ephraim sounds like the Hebrew for twice fruitful.

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³Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph's brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. ⁵So Israel's sons were among those who went to buy grain, for there was famine in the land of Canaan also.

⁶Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the person who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground. ⁷As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them. "Where do you come from?" he asked.

"From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food."

⁸Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. ⁹Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

¹⁰"No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies."

¹²"No!" he said to them. "You have come to see where our land is unprotected."

¹³But they replied, "Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more."

¹⁴Joseph said to them, "It is just as I told you: You are spies! ¹⁵And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!" ¹⁷And he put them all in custody for three days.

¹⁸On the third day, Joseph said to them, "Do this and you will live, for I fear God: ¹⁹If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest

of you go and take grain back for your starving households. ²⁰But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do.

²¹They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us."

²²Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood." ²³They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.

²⁴He turned away from them and began to weep, but then came back and spoke to them again. He had Simeon taken from them and bound before their eyes.

²⁵Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain, to put each man's silver back in his sack, and to give them provisions for their journey. After this was done for them, ²⁶they loaded their grain on their donkeys and left.

²⁷At the place where they stopped for the night one of them opened his sack to get feed for his donkey, and he saw his silver in the mouth of his sack. ²⁸"My silver has been returned," he said to his brothers. "Here it is in my sack."

Their hearts sank and they turned to each other trembling and said, "What is this that God has done to us?"

²⁹When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them. They said, ³⁰"The man who is lord over the land spoke harshly to us and treated us as though we were spying on the land. ³¹But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies. ³²We were twelve brothers, sons of one father. One is no more, and the youngest is now with our father in Canaan.'

³³"Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, 'This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of

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your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go. ³⁴But bring your youngest brother to me so I will know that you are not spies but honest men. Then I will give your brother back to you, and you can trade^a in the land.’”

³⁵As they were emptying their sacks, there in each man’s sack was his pouch of silver! When they and their father saw the money pouches, they were frightened. ³⁶Their father Jacob said to them, “You have deprived me of my children. Joseph is no more and Simeon is no more, and now you want to take Benjamin. Everything is against me!”

³⁷Then Reuben said to his father, “You may put both of my sons to death if I do not bring him back to you. Entrust him to my care, and I will bring him back.”

³⁸But Jacob said, “My son will not go down there with you; his brother is dead and he is the only one left. If harm comes to him on the journey you are taking, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in sorrow.”

The Second Journey to Egypt

43 Now the famine was still severe in the land. ²So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, “Go back and buy us a little more food.”

³But Judah said to him, “The man warned us solemnly, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’ ⁴If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. ⁵But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, ‘You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.’”

⁶Israel asked, “Why did you bring this trouble on me by telling the man you had another brother?”

⁷They replied, “The man questioned us closely about ourselves and our family. ‘Is your father still living?’ he asked us.

‘Do you have another brother?’ We simply answered his questions. How were we to know he would say, ‘Bring your brother down here?’”

⁸Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the boy along with me and we will go at once, so that we and you and our children may live and not die. ⁹I myself will guarantee his safety; you can hold me personally responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him here before you, I will bear the blame before you all my life. ¹⁰As it is, if we had not delayed, we could have gone and returned twice.”

¹¹Then their father Israel said to them, “If it must be, then do this: Put some of the best products of the land in your bags and take them down to the man as a gift — a little balm and a little honey, some spices and myrrh, some pistachio nuts and almonds. ¹²Take double the amount of silver with you, for you must return the silver that was put back into the mouths of your sacks. Perhaps it was a mistake. ¹³Take your brother also and go back to the man at once. ¹⁴And may God Almighty^b grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you. As for me, if I am bereaved, I am bereaved.”

¹⁵So the men took the gifts and double the amount of silver, and Benjamin also. They hurried down to Egypt and presented themselves to Joseph. ¹⁶When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Take these men to my house, slaughter an animal and prepare a meal; they are to eat with me at noon.”

¹⁷The man did as Joseph told him and took the men to Joseph’s house. ¹⁸Now the men were frightened when they were taken to his house. They thought, “We were brought here because of the silver that was put back into our sacks the first time. He wants to attack us and overpower us and seize us as slaves and take our donkeys.”

¹⁹So they went up to Joseph’s steward

^a 34 Or move about freely

^b 14 Hebrew *El-Shaddai*

and spoke to him at the entrance to the house. ²⁰“We beg your pardon, our lord,” they said, “we came down here the first time to buy food. ²¹But at the place where we stopped for the night we opened our sacks and each of us found his silver — the exact weight — in the mouth of his sack. So we have brought it back with us. ²²We have also brought additional silver with us to buy food. We don’t know who put our silver in our sacks.”

²³“It’s all right,” he said. “Don’t be afraid. Your God, the God of your father, has given you treasure in your sacks; I received your silver.” Then he brought Simeon out to them.

²⁴The steward took the men into Joseph’s house, gave them water to wash their feet and provided fodder for their donkeys. ²⁵They prepared their gifts for Joseph’s arrival at noon, because they had heard that they were to eat there.

²⁶When Joseph came home, they presented to him the gifts they had brought into the house, and they bowed down before him to the ground. ²⁷He asked them how they were, and then he said, “How is your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?”

²⁸They replied, “Your servant our father is still alive and well.” And they bowed down, prostrating themselves before him.

²⁹As he looked about and saw his brother Benjamin, his own mother’s son, he asked, “Is this your youngest brother, the one you told me about?” And he said, “God be gracious to you, my son.” ³⁰Deeply moved at the sight of his brother, Joseph hurried out and looked for a place to weep. He went into his private room and wept there.

³¹After he had washed his face, he came out and, controlling himself, said, “Serve the food.”

³²They served him by himself, the brothers by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because Egyptians could not eat with Hebrews, for that is detestable to Egyptians. ³³The men had been seated before him in the order of their

ages, from the firstborn to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment. ³⁴When portions were served to them from Joseph’s table, Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as anyone else’s. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

A Silver Cup in a Sack

44 Now Joseph gave these instructions to the steward of his house: “Fill the men’s sacks with as much food as they can carry, and put each man’s silver in the mouth of his sack. ²Then put my cup, the silver one, in the mouth of the youngest one’s sack, along with the silver for his grain.” And he did as Joseph said.

³As morning dawned, the men were sent on their way with their donkeys. ⁴They had not gone far from the city when Joseph said to his steward, “Go after those men at once, and when you catch up with them, say to them, ‘Why have you repaid good with evil? ⁵Isn’t this the cup my master drinks from and also uses for divination? This is a wicked thing you have done.’”

⁶When he caught up with them, he repeated these words to them. ⁷But they said to him, “Why does my lord say such things? Far be it from your servants to do anything like that! ⁸We even brought back to you from the land of Canaan the silver we found inside the mouths of our sacks. So why would we steal silver or gold from your master’s house? ⁹If any of your servants is found to have it, he will die; and the rest of us will become my lord’s slaves.”

¹⁰“Very well, then,” he said, “let it be as you say. Whoever is found to have it will become my slave; the rest of you will be free from blame.”

¹¹Each of them quickly lowered his sack to the ground and opened it. ¹²Then the steward proceeded to search, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest. And the cup was found in Benjamin’s sack. ¹³At this, they tore their clothes. Then they all loaded their donkeys and returned to the city.

¹⁴Joseph was still in the house when Judah and his brothers came in, and they threw themselves to the ground before him. ¹⁵Joseph said to them, “What is this you have done? Don’t you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?”

6 ¹⁶“What can we say to my lord?” Judah replied. “What can we say? How can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered your servants’ guilt. We are now my lord’s slaves — we ourselves and the one who was found to have the cup.”

¹⁷But Joseph said, “Far be it from me to do such a thing! Only the man who was found to have the cup will become my slave. The rest of you, go back to your father in peace.”

¹⁸Then Judah went up to him and said: “Pardon your servant, my lord, let me speak a word to my lord. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself. ¹⁹My lord asked his servants, ‘Do you have a father or a brother?’ ²⁰And we answered, ‘We have an aged father, and there is a young son born to him in his old age. His brother is dead, and he is the only one of his mother’s sons left, and his father loves him.’

²¹“Then you said to your servants, ‘Bring him down to me so I can see him for myself.’ ²²And we said to my lord, ‘The boy cannot leave his father; if he leaves him, his father will die.’ ²³But you told your servants, ‘Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you will not see my face again.’ ²⁴When we went back to your servant my father, we told him what my lord had said.

²⁵“Then our father said, ‘Go back and buy a little more food.’ ²⁶But we said, ‘We cannot go down. Only if our youngest brother is with us will we go. We cannot see the man’s face unless our youngest brother is with us.’

²⁷“Your servant my father said to us, ‘You know that my wife bore me two sons. ²⁸One of them went away from me, and I said, “He has surely been torn to pieces.” And I have not seen him since. ²⁹If you take

this one from me too and harm comes to him, you will bring my gray head down to the grave in misery.’

³⁰“So now, if the boy is not with us when I go back to your servant my father, and if my father, whose life is closely bound up with the boy’s life, ³¹sees that the boy isn’t there, he will die. Your servants will bring the gray head of our father down to the grave in sorrow. ³²Your servant guaranteed the boy’s safety to my father. I said, ‘If I do not bring him back to you, I will bear the blame before you, my father, all my life!’

³³“Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord’s slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. ³⁴How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come on my father.”

Joseph Makes Himself Known

45 Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone leave my presence!” So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. ²And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it.

³Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. ⁷But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.^a

^a 7 Or save you as a great band of survivors

⁸“So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. ⁹Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay. ¹⁰You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me — you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. ¹¹I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’

¹²“You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. ¹³Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.”

¹⁴Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

¹⁶When the news reached Pharaoh’s palace that Joseph’s brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. ¹⁷Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Tell your brothers, ‘Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, ¹⁸and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.’

¹⁹“You are also directed to tell them, ‘Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. ²⁰Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.’”

²¹So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. ²²To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels^a of silver and five

sets of clothes. ²³And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. ²⁴Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, “Don’t quarrel on the way!”

²⁵So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. ²⁶They told him, “Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.” Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. ²⁷But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸And Israel said, “I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.”

Jacob Goes to Egypt

46 So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

²And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, “Jacob! Jacob!”

“Here I am,” he replied.

³“I am God, the God of your father,” he said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. ⁴I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph’s own hand will close your eyes.”

⁵Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel’s sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. ⁶So Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt, taking with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan. ⁷Jacob brought with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters — all his offspring.

⁸These are the names of the sons of Israel (Jacob and his descendants) who went to Egypt:

^a22 That is, about 7 1/2 pounds or about 3.5 kilograms

- Reuben the firstborn of Jacob.
⁹The sons of Reuben:
 Hanok, Pallu, Hezron and Karmi.
¹⁰The sons of Simeon:
 Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jakin, Zohar
 and Shaul the son of a Canaanite
 woman.
¹¹The sons of Levi:
 Gershon, Kohath and Merari.
¹²The sons of Judah:
 Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez and Zerah
 (but Er and Onan had died in the
 land of Canaan).
 The sons of Perez:
 Hezron and Hamul.
¹³The sons of Issachar:
 Tola, Puah,^a Jashub^b and Shimron.
¹⁴The sons of Zebulun:
 Sered, Elon and Jahleel.
¹⁵These were the sons Leah bore to Jacob
 in Paddan Aram,^c besides his daughter Di-
 nah. These sons and daughters of his were
 thirty-three in all.
¹⁶The sons of Gad:
 Zephon,^d Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri,
 Arodi and Areli.
¹⁷The sons of Asher:
 Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi and Beriah.
 Their sister was Serah.
 The sons of Beriah:
 Heber and Malkiel.
¹⁸These were the children born to Jacob
 by Zilpah, whom Laban had given to his
 daughter Leah — sixteen in all.
¹⁹The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel:
 Joseph and Benjamin. ²⁰In Egypt,
 Manasseh and Ephraim were born
 to Joseph by Asenath daughter of
 Potiphera, priest of On.^e
²¹The sons of Benjamin:
 Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman,
 Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppin and
 Ard.

²²These were the sons of Rachel who
 were born to Jacob — fourteen in all.

²³The son of Dan:
 Hushim.

²⁴The sons of Naphtali:
 Jahziel, Guni, Jezer and Shillem.

²⁵These were the sons born to Jacob
 by Bilhah, whom Laban had given to his
 daughter Rachel — seven in all.

²⁶All those who went to Egypt with Ja-
 cob — those who were his direct descen-
 dants, not counting his sons' wives —
 numbered sixty-six persons. ²⁷With the
 two sons^f who had been born to Joseph
 in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family,
 which went to Egypt, were seventy^g in all.

²⁸Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to
 Joseph to get directions to Goshen. When
 they arrived in the region of Goshen, ²⁹Jo-
 seph had his chariot made ready and went
 to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon
 as Joseph appeared before him, he threw
 his arms around his father^h and wept for
 a long time.

³⁰Israel said to Joseph, "Now I am ready
 to die, since I have seen for myself that you
 are still alive."

³¹Then Joseph said to his brothers and
 to his father's household, "I will go up and
 speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My
 brothers and my father's household, who
 were living in the land of Canaan, have
 come to me. ³²The men are shepherds; they
 tend livestock, and they have brought along
 their flocks and herds and everything they
 own.' ³³When Pharaoh calls you in and
 asks, 'What is your occupation?' ³⁴you
 should answer, 'Your servants have tended
 livestock from our boyhood on, just as our
 fathers did.' Then you will be allowed to
 settle in the region of Goshen, for all shep-
 herds are detestable to the Egyptians."

^a 13 Samaritan Pentateuch and Syriac (see also 1 Chron. 7:1); Masoretic Text *Puvah* ^b 13 Samaritan Pentateuch
 and some Septuagint manuscripts (see also Num. 26:24 and 1 Chron. 7:1); Masoretic Text *Iob* ^c 15 That is,
 Northwest Mesopotamia ^d 16 Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint (see also Num. 26:15); Masoretic Text
Ziphion ^e 20 That is, Heliopolis ^f 27 Hebrew; Septuagint *the nine children* ^g 27 Hebrew (see also Exodus
 1:5 and note); Septuagint (see also Acts 7:14) *seventy-five* ^h 29 Hebrew *around him*

47 Joseph went and told Pharaoh, “My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen.”² He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh.

³Pharaoh asked the brothers, “What is your occupation?”

“Your servants are shepherds,” they replied to Pharaoh, “just as our fathers were.”

⁴They also said to him, “We have come to live here for a while, because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants’ flocks have no pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen.”

⁵Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and your brothers have come to you, ⁶and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock.”

⁷Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed^a Pharaoh, ⁸Pharaoh asked him, “How old are you?”

⁹And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers.” ¹⁰Then Jacob blessed^b Pharaoh and went out from his presence.

¹¹So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. ¹²Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father’s household with food, according to the number of their children.

Joseph and the Famine

¹³There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted

away because of the famine. ¹⁴Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh’s palace. ¹⁵When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, “Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is all gone.”

¹⁶“Then bring your livestock,” said Joseph. “I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone.”

¹⁷So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock.

¹⁸When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, “We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. ¹⁹Why should we perish before your eyes — we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate.”

²⁰So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh’s, ²¹and Joseph reduced the people to servitude,^c from one end of Egypt to the other. ²²However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land.

²³Joseph said to the people, “Now that I have bought you and your land today for Pharaoh, here is seed for you so you can plant the ground. ²⁴But when the crop

^a 7 Or *greeted* ^b 10 Or *said farewell to* ^c 21 Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint (see also Vulgate); Masoretic Text and he moved the people into the cities

comes in, give a fifth of it to Pharaoh. The other four-fifths you may keep as seed for the fields and as food for yourselves and your households and your children.”

²⁵“You have saved our lives,” they said. “May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh.”

²⁶So Joseph established it as a law concerning land in Egypt — still in force today — that a fifth of the produce belongs to Pharaoh. It was only the land of the priests that did not become Pharaoh’s.

²⁷Now the Israelites settled in Egypt in the region of Goshen. They acquired property there and were fruitful and increased greatly in number.

²⁸Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven. ²⁹When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, “If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, ³⁰but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried.”

“I will do as you say,” he said.

³¹“Swear to me,” he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.^a

Manasseh and Ephraim

48 Some time later Joseph was told, “Your father is ill.” So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him. ²When Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed.

³Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty^b appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me ⁴and said to me, ‘I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.’

⁵“Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. ⁶Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers. ⁷As I was returning from Paddan,^c to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath” (that is, Bethlehem).

⁸When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, “Who are these?”

⁹“They are the sons God has given me here,” Joseph said to his father.

Then Israel said, “Bring them to me so I may bless them.”

¹⁰Now Israel’s eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. So Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them.

¹¹Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too.”

¹²Then Joseph removed them from Israel’s knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. ¹³And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel’s left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them close to him. ¹⁴But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim’s head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh’s head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn.

¹⁵Then he blessed Joseph and said,

“May the God before whom my fathers
Abraham and Isaac walked

faithfully,

the God who has been my shepherd
all my life to this day,

¹⁶the Angel who has delivered me from
all harm

— may he bless these boys.

^a 31 Or *Israel bowed down at the head of his bed* ^b 3 Hebrew *El-Shaddai* ^c 7 That is, Northwest Mesopotamia

May they be called by my name
and the names of my fathers
Abraham and Isaac,
and may they increase greatly
on the earth.”

¹⁷When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim’s head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. ¹⁸Joseph said to him, “No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.”

¹⁹But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.” ²⁰He blessed them that day and said,

“In your^a name will Israel pronounce
this blessing:
‘May God make you like Ephraim
and Manasseh.’”

So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh.

²¹Then Israel said to Joseph, “I am about to die, but God will be with you^b and take you^b back to the land of your^b fathers. ²²And to you I give one more ridge of land^c than to your brothers, the ridge I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow.”

Jacob Blesses His Sons

49 Then Jacob called for his sons and said: “Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come.

²“Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob;
listen to your father Israel.

³“Reuben, you are my firstborn,
my might, the first sign of my
strength,
excelling in honor, excelling in power.

⁴Turbulent as the waters, you will no
longer excel,
for you went up onto your father’s
bed,
onto my couch and defiled it.

⁵“Simeon and Levi are brothers —
their swords^d are weapons of
violence.

⁶Let me not enter their council,
let me not join their assembly,
for they have killed men in their
anger
and hamstringed oxen as they
pleased.

⁷Cursed be their anger, so fierce,
and their fury, so cruel!
I will scatter them in Jacob
and disperse them in Israel.

⁸“Judah,^e your brothers will praise you;
your hand will be on the neck of your
enemies;
your father’s sons will bow down to
you.

⁹You are a lion’s cub, Judah;
you return from the prey, my son.
Like a lion he crouches and lies down,
like a lioness — who dares to rouse
him?

¹⁰The scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler’s staff from between his
feet,^f

until he to whom it belongs^g shall come
and the obedience of the nations
shall be his.

¹¹He will tether his donkey to a vine,
his colt to the choicest branch;
he will wash his garments in wine,
his robes in the blood of grapes.

¹²His eyes will be darker than wine,
his teeth whiter than milk.^h

¹³“Zebulun will live by the seashore
and become a haven for ships;
his border will extend toward Sidon.

^a 20 The Hebrew is singular. ^b 21 The Hebrew is plural. ^c 22 The Hebrew for *ridge of land* is identical with the place name Shechem. ^d 5 The meaning of the Hebrew for this word is uncertain. ^e 8 *Judah* sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *praise*. ^f 10 Or *from his descendants* ^g 10 Or *to whom tribute belongs*; the meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain. ^h 12 Or *will be dull from wine, / his teeth white from milk*

- 14“Issachar is a rawboned^a donkey
lying down among the sheep pens.^b
15When he sees how good is his resting
place
and how pleasant is his land,
he will bend his shoulder to the burden
and submit to forced labor.
- 16“Dan^c will provide justice for his
people
as one of the tribes of Israel.
17Dan will be a snake by the roadside,
a viper along the path,
that bites the horse’s heels
so that its rider tumbles backward.
- 18“I look for your deliverance, LORD.
19“Gad^d will be attacked by a band of
raiders,
but he will attack them at their heels.
- 20“Asher’s food will be rich;
he will provide delicacies fit for a
king.
- 21“Naphtali is a doe set free
that bears beautiful fawns.^e
22“Joseph is a fruitful vine,
a fruitful vine near a spring,
whose branches climb over a wall.^f
23With bitterness archers attacked him;
they shot at him with hostility.
24But his bow remained steady,
his strong arms stayed^g limber,
because of the hand of the Mighty One
of Jacob,
because of the Shepherd, the Rock of
Israel,
25because of your father’s God, who helps
you,
because of the Almighty,^h who
blesses you
with blessings of the skies above,
blessings of the deep springs below,
blessings of the breast and womb.

- 26Your father’s blessings are greater
than the blessings of the ancient
mountains,
thanⁱ the bounty of the age-old hills.
Let all these rest on the head of Joseph,
on the brow of the prince among^j his
brothers.
- 27“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
in the morning he devours the prey,
in the evening he divides the plunder.”

28All these are the twelve tribes of Israel,
and this is what their father said to them
when he blessed them, giving each the
blessing appropriate to him.

The Death of Jacob

29Then he gave them these instructions:
“I am about to be gathered to my people.
Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the
field of Ephron the Hittite, 30the cave in
the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Ca-
naan, which Abraham bought along with
the field as a burial place from Ephron the
Hittite. 31There Abraham and his wife Sar-
ah were buried, there Isaac and his wife
Rebekah were buried, and there I buried
Leah. 32The field and the cave in it were
bought from the Hittites.^k”

33When Jacob had finished giving in-
structions to his sons, he drew his feet
up into the bed, breathed his last and was
gathered to his people.

50 Joseph threw himself on his
father and wept over him and
kissed him. 2Then Joseph di-
rected the physicians in his service to em-
balm his father Israel. So the physicians
embalmed him, 3taking a full forty days,
for that was the time required for embalm-
ing. And the Egyptians mourned for him
seventy days.

4When the days of mourning had
passed, Joseph said to Pharaoh’s court, “If

^a 14 Or *strong* ^b 14 Or *the campfires; or the saddlebags* ^c 16 Dan here means *he provides justice*. ^d 19 Gad sounds like the Hebrew for *attack* and also for *band of raiders*. ^e 21 Or *free; / he utters beautiful words* ^f 22 Or *Joseph is a wild colt, / a wild colt near a spring, / a wild donkey on a terraced hill* ^g 23,24 Or *archers will attack . . . will shoot . . . will remain . . . will stay* ^h 25 Hebrew *Shaddai* ⁱ 26 Or *of my progenitors, / as great as* ^j 26 Or *of the one separated from* ^k 32 Or *the descendants of Heth*

I have found favor in your eyes, speak to Pharaoh for me. Tell him, ⁵“My father made me swear an oath and said, “I am about to die; bury me in the tomb I dug for myself in the land of Canaan.” Now let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.’”

⁶Pharaoh said, “Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear to do.”

⁷So Joseph went up to bury his father. All Pharaoh’s officials accompanied him — the dignitaries of his court and all the dignitaries of Egypt — ⁸besides all the members of Joseph’s household and his brothers and those belonging to his father’s household. Only their children and their flocks and herds were left in Goshen. ⁹Chariots and horsemen^a also went up with him. It was a very large company.

¹⁰When they reached the threshing floor of Atad, near the Jordan, they lamented loudly and bitterly; and there Joseph observed a seven-day period of mourning for his father. ¹¹When the Canaanites who lived there saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, “The Egyptians are holding a solemn ceremony of mourning.” That is why that place near the Jordan is called Abel Mizraim.^b

¹²So Jacob’s sons did as he had commanded them: ¹³They carried him to the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre, which Abraham had bought along with the field as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite. ¹⁴After burying his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, together with his brothers and all the others who had gone with him to bury his father.

Joseph Reassures His Brothers

¹⁵When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph

holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?” ¹⁶So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: ¹⁷“This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept.

¹⁸His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. “We are your slaves,” they said.

¹⁹But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

The Death of Joseph

²²Joseph stayed in Egypt, along with all his father’s family. He lived a hundred and ten years ²³and saw the third generation of Ephraim’s children. Also the children of Makir son of Manasseh were placed at birth on Joseph’s knees.^c

²⁴Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” ²⁵And Joseph made the Israelites swear an oath and said, “God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place.”

²⁶So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.

^a 9 Or charioteers

^b 11 Abel Mizraim means *mourning of the Egyptians*.

^c 23 That is, were counted as his

The New Testament



Matthew

THEME: Mercy and justice are to be paramount virtues in a Christian's life. Mercy dictates love for fellow human beings and directly affects a believer's relationship to God.

AUTHOR: The author of this Gospel was probably Matthew (Levi), the man who left his tax office to follow Jesus (see character study on page 1140).

DATE OF WRITING: Matthew was probably written between AD 70 and 80.

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM MATTHEW: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:29 – 31).

CHALLENGE FROM MATTHEW: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

REFLECTION FROM MATTHEW: "Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times'" (Matthew 18:21 – 22).

Jesus Christ is the one and only Higher Power. He alone is able to save us from our sins and provide the way of access into heaven. In order to find true healing from our hurts, hang-ups and habits, we must turn our lives and wills over to his care. But most of us are not willing to trust our lives and future to someone we've never met. That's exactly what makes the Gospel of Matthew so amazing. Our Savior isn't hiding behind some mysterious religious haze. Instead, we are able to meet Jesus in an intimate way for the first time.

In this book we witness Jesus' unflinching confrontation with Satan, learning from our Lord's handling of temptation how we can face down our own enticements to fall back under the spell of whatever has allured us from the way of truth. We get to see him healing the sick, and we are allowed access into his darkest hours and his most glorious moments.

In Matthew Jesus delivers his most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon is the foundation for the eight principles of Celebrate Recovery. Jesus cares deeply about our hurts, hang-ups and habits and wants us to find victory over them by trusting in him. The book of Matthew begins to give us a picture of what kind of a Savior Jesus is and what he can do for us today.

The Genealogy of Jesus the Messiah

1 This is the genealogy^a of Jesus the Messiah^b the son of David, the son of Abraham:

² Abraham was the father of Isaac,
Isaac the father of Jacob,
Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

³ Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar,
Perez the father of Hezron,
Hezron the father of Ram,

⁴ Ram the father of Amminadab,
Amminadab the father of Nahshon,

Nahshon the father of Salmon,
⁵ Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab,

Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth,
Obed the father of Jesse,

⁶ and Jesse the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife,

⁷ Solomon the father of Rehoboam,
Rehoboam the father of Abijah,
Abijah the father of Asa,

⁸ Asa the father of Jehoshaphat,
Jehoshaphat the father of Jehoram,
Jehoram the father of Uzziah,

⁹ Uzziah the father of Jotham,
Jotham the father of Ahaz,
Ahaz the father of Hezekiah,

¹⁰ Hezekiah the father of Manasseh,
Manasseh the father of Amon,
Amon the father of Josiah,

¹¹ and Josiah the father of Jeconiah^c and his brothers at the time of the exile to Babylon.

¹² After the exile to Babylon:
Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,
Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel,

¹³ Zerubbabel the father of Abihud,
Abihud the father of Eliakim,
Eliakim the father of Azor,

¹⁴ Azor the father of Zadok,
Zadok the father of Akim,
Akim the father of Elihud,

¹⁵ Elihud the father of Eleazar,
Eleazar the father of Matthan,
Matthan the father of Jacob,

¹⁶ and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.

¹⁷ Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

Joseph Accepts Jesus as His Son

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^d: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^e did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^f because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"^g (which means "God with us").

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and

^a 1 Or is an account of the origin ^b 1 Or Jesus Christ. Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) both mean Anointed One; also in verse 18. ^c 11 That is, Jehoiachin; also in verse 12 ^d 18 Or The origin of Jesus the Messiah was like this ^e 19 Or was a righteous man and ^f 21 Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means the LORD saves. ^g 23 Isaiah 7:14

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8 L took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

The Magi Visit the Messiah

2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi^a from the east came to Jerusalem² and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵“In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

6 “But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”^b

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in

a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

The Escape to Egypt

¹³When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. “Get up,” he said, “take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him.”

¹⁴So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”^c

¹⁶When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. ¹⁷Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 “A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.”^d

The Return to Nazareth

¹⁹After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead.”

²¹So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²²But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

^a 1 Traditionally *wise men* ^b 6 Micah 5:2,4 ^c 15 Hosea 11:1 ^d 18 Jer. 31:15

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea² and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’”^a

⁴John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

¹¹“I baptize you with^b water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with^b the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

¹⁵Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

¹⁶As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^c by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

⁴Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”^d

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶“If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written:

“‘He will command his angels
concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their
hands,
so that you will not strike your foot
against a stone.’”^e

⁷Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”^f

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹“All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.”

¹⁰Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’”^g

¹¹Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

^a 3 Isaiah 40:3 ^b 11 Or in ^c 1 The Greek for *tempted* can also mean *tested*. ^d 4 Deut. 8:3

^e 6 Psalm 91:11,12 ^f 7 Deut. 6:16 ^g 10 Deut. 6:13

Jesus Begins to Preach

12When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he withdrew to Galilee. 13Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali — 14to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

15“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the Way of the Sea, beyond the
Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles —
16the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the
shadow of death
a light has dawned.”^a

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17From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

18As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” 20At once they left their nets and followed him.

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21Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus Heals the Sick

23Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. 24News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those

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having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. 25Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis,^b Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

He said:

3“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

6Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

7Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

9Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of
God.

10Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

13“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14“You are the light of the world. A town

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^a 16 Isaiah 9:1,2 ^b 25 That is, the Ten Cities

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8 built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The Fulfillment of the Law

7
8 ¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Murder

6 ²¹“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,^a and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²²But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^{b,c} will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’^d is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵“Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or

your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’^e ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

³¹“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’^f ³²But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ ³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.^g

Eye for Eye

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’^h ³⁹But I tell

^a 21 Exodus 20:13 ^b 22 The Greek word for *brother or sister* (*adelphos*) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verse 23. ^c 22 Some manuscripts *brother or sister without cause* ^d 22 An Aramaic term of contempt ^e 27 Exodus 20:14 ^f 31 Deut. 24:1 ^g 37 Or *from evil* ^h 38 Exodus 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21

CROSSROADS LESSON [*Principle Seven*]

For the previous entry in the CROSSROADS lesson, go to 1 John 1:8–10 (page 1557).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii–xliv.

If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

MATTHEW 5:23–24

In Principle Seven we reserve a daily quiet time with God for self-examination, Bible reading and prayer in order to get to know God and his will for our lives and to gain the power to follow his will. We're at the CROSSROADS of our recovery. We need to thank God for getting us this far on our road to recovery, to praise him for the many victories we've already experienced over our hurts, hang-ups and habits. But we also need to continue working the last two principles with the same devotion and enthusiasm that got us to this point in our recovery. In the first part of Principle Seven we reserve a daily quiet time with God for self-examination. This relates to Step Ten of the Christ-centered 12 steps.

Step Ten: We continued to take personal inventory and, when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

This principle is made up of three key actions. The third action is represented by the letter *N* of Step TEN: NEED TO ADMIT OUR WRONGS PROMPTLY. John 3:21 declares, "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been in the sight of God." This principle brings us, on a daily basis, into the light. Once we see that light, we have a choice: We can ignore it or we can act on it. If we act on it on a daily basis, we're working Principle Seven. We need to admit our wrongs and make amends promptly.

As soon as we realize that we've blown it, we need to promptly admit it. That's precisely what Jesus is telling us to do in Matthew 5:23–24.

One way to easily keep track of our day, focusing on our good and bad behaviors, is to keep a journal. Our journal isn't a place to jot down the calories we've ingested for lunch today or our carpool schedule for school. It's a tool for us to review and record the good and the bad things we've done today.

We should look for negative patterns and issues that we're continually writing down and having to make amends for—again and again. We then need to share them with our sponsor or accountability partner, and set up an action plan so that we can overcome them with God's help. We should start each day's entry with one thing from our experiences of the day for which we're thankful. That will get us writing.

This is the final page of the CROSSROADS lesson.

you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^a and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Giving to the Needy

6 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

²“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Prayer

⁵“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street cor-

ners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹“This, then, is how you should pray:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹Give us today our daily bread.
¹²And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³And lead us not into temptation,^b
but deliver us from the evil one.^c

¹⁴For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Fasting

¹⁶“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰But store up for yourselves trea-

^a 43 Lev. 19:18 ^b 13 The Greek for *temptation* can also mean *testing*.

^c 13 Or *from evil*; some late manuscripts

one, /for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

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sures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy,^a your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eyes are unhealthy,^b your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Do Not Worry

²⁵“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is

^a 22 The Greek for *healthy* here implies *generous*. ^b 23 The Greek for *unhealthy* here implies *stingy*.

SPIRITUAL INVENTORY LESSON [*Principle Four*]

This is the first page of the SPIRITUAL INVENTORY lesson.

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii – xliv.

*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

MATTHEW 6:12–13

Principle Four begins the process of “coming clean.” It’s here that we openly examine and confess our faults to ourselves, to God and to someone else we trust. In the first part of Principle Four we openly examine our lives.

As part of completing Principle Four we do a SPIRITUAL INVENTORY. We look at eight critical areas of our lives. The first is our RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS. We pray, as Jesus taught us in the Lord’s Prayer (see Matthew 6:9–13), about our need to forgive those who have hurt us, just as we’ve been forgiven by the Lord. In order to offer forgiveness, we need to evaluate both our past and our present relationships with others.

We need to ask ourselves the following questions regarding our relationships with others:

1. Who has hurt us?
2. Against whom have we been holding a grudge?
3. Against whom are we still seeking revenge?
4. Are we jealous of someone? Who and why?
5. Have we tried to justify our bad attitude by pinning the blame on someone else?
6. Whom have we hurt?
7. Of whom have we been critical or gossiped about?

The second area of our Spiritual Inventory is OUR PRIORITIES IN LIFE.

Go to Matthew 6:33 (page 1134).

not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life^a?

²⁸“And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They

do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you — you of little faith? ³¹So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For

^a 27 Or single cubit to your height

SPIRITUAL INVENTORY LESSON [Principle Four]

For the previous entry in the SPIRITUAL INVENTORY lesson, go to Matthew 6:12–13 (page 1133).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii–xlv.

*Seek first [God’s] kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.*

MATTHEW 6:33

Principle Four begins the process of “coming clean.” It’s here that we openly examine and confess our faults to ourselves, to God and to someone else we trust. In the first part of Principle Four we openly examine our lives.

As part of completing Principle Four we do a SPIRITUAL INVENTORY. We look at eight critical areas of our lives. The second area is OUR PRIORITIES IN LIFE. A guiding principle of human behavior is that we, as human beings, do whatever is important to us. Others can identify our priorities by our actions, not necessarily by our words. In Matthew 6:33 Jesus tells us what will happen if we make him our number-one priority: “All these [other necessary] things will be given to you as well.”

We need to ask ourselves the following questions regarding our priorities in life:

1. After making the decision to turn over our lives and our will to God, in what areas of life are we still not putting God first? What closet are we refusing to let him enter and clean out?
2. What in our past is interfering with our willingness or ability to do God’s will? Our ambition? Is our life driven by a desire to serve God or is it driven by envy or a desire for life’s pleasures?
3. What have been our priorities in our job? Our friendships? Our personal goals?
4. Whom have our priorities affected?
5. What has been good about our priorities?
6. What has been wrong with them?

The third area of our Spiritual Inventory is OUR ATTITUDE. Go to Ephesians 4:31 (page 1470).

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8 the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Judging Others

6 **7** “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ²For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

³“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴How

6 can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

⁶“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Ask, Seek, Knock

⁷“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹“Which of you, if your son asks for

POWERLESS LESSON [*Principle One*]

For the previous entry in the POWERLESS lesson, go to Luke 12:2–3 (page 1264).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii–xliv.

*Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

MATTHEW 6:34

The power to change comes only through God’s grace. Principle One states: “Realize I’m not God. I admit that I’m powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life has become unmanageable.” If we admit that we’re powerless, we recognize our need for a power greater than ourselves to restore us. That power is our Higher Power, the one and only true Higher Power, Jesus Christ.

In Principle One we discover that we’re POWERLESS to control our own lives and that our lives have become unmanageable. The *W* in POWERLESS stands for WORRYING. All worrying is a form of failing to trust God. Instead of fretting about things we can’t possibly control, we need to focus on what God can do. It’s a good idea to keep a copy of the Serenity Prayer in our pocket and in our heart as a continual reminder: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

By working this program and completing the principles, we can find that trust in — that relationship with — the one and only Higher Power, Jesus Christ. As we grow closer to him, we’ll find that our anxiety begins to fade away.

The next letter in POWERLESS is *E*. Go to Ephesians 5:13–14 (page 1474).

bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

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The Narrow and Wide Gates

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road

that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

True and False Prophets

¹⁵“Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

ACTION LESSON [*Principle Three*]

For the previous entry in the ACTION lesson, go to Philippians 1:6 (page 1478).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii–xliv.

*Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

MATTHEW 6:34

In Principle Three we consciously choose to commit all our lives and will to Christ’s care and control. We make the decision to TURN every aspect of our lives and will over to our Higher Power, Jesus Christ. In order to turn our lives over to Christ’s care and control, we need to take ACTION.

The letter O in ACTION stands for ONE DAY AT A TIME. Our recovery happens just that way. If we remain stuck in yesterday or constantly worry about tomorrow, we’ll waste the precious time God is giving us in the present. And it’s only in the present that change and growth can occur. We can’t change yesterday and we can only pray about tomorrow. In Matthew 6:34 Jesus gives us instructions for living in 24-hour segments.

Every one of us would like to go back and change something — or a lot of things — we did in the past. If we only had the chance, we would do so many things differently. We would choose to spare our family the pain our sin addictions and compulsive behaviors have caused. But we can’t change even one thing that’s already happened.

On the other side of the coin, we can’t live somewhere way off in the future, always worrying about whether this or that is going to happen. We need to pray about tomorrow and then leave the particulars up to God. But we can live in today. And we can, with Christ’s guidance and direction, make a difference in the way we live out each one of the todays God gives us. We can make a difference — one day at a time.

The last letter in ACTION is N. Go to 1 Corinthians 15:2–4 (page 1435).

¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

True and False Disciples

²¹“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name per-

form many miracles?’ ²³Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

The Wise and Foolish Builders

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice

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VICTORY LESSON [*Principle Five*]

For the previous entry in the VICTORY lesson, go to James 4:10 (page 1542).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii – xlv.

*Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

MATTHEW 6:34

In Principle Five, as we voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in our lives and humbly ask him to remove our character defects, we’ll find VICTORY in our recovery.

The next letter in VICTORY is O, which stands for ONE DAY AT A TIME. Our character defects didn’t develop overnight, so we shouldn’t expect them to instantly disappear. Recovery happens one day at a time. Our lifelong hurts, hang-ups and habits need to be worked on in 24-hour increments. There’s an old maxim: “Life by the yard is hard; life by the inch is a cinch.” Jesus is saying the same thing in Matthew 6:34. He’s telling us to live in day-tight compartments.

In Exodus 3:14 “God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: “I AM has sent me to you.”’” God is the God of our past, present and future. But the positive changes found in working Principle Five can only be made in the present. We can’t change one thing we’ve done or one thing that’s happened to us in our past. We can’t always be consumed with worrying about what’s going to happen to us in the future either. But with God’s help we can steadily work on making the changes we so intensely desire in the present — today, tomorrow and the next day — one day at a time.

Remember, when we get weary or discouraged, Christ is always with us. In Matthew 11:28 he offers us comfort and encouragement: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

The next letter in VICTORY is R. Go to Philippians 1:6 (page 1479).

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is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy

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8 When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ²A man with leprosy^a came and knelt before him and said, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

³Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. ⁴Then Jesus said to him, “See that you don’t tell anyone. But go, show yourself to

the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

The Faith of the Centurion

⁵When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶“Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

⁷Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

⁸The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Isra-

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^a 2 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

CONFESS LESSON [*Principle Four*]

For the previous entry in the CONFESS lesson, go to Psalm 32:3–5 (page 652).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii–xlv.

*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye
and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?*

MATTHEW 7:3

Principle Four begins the process of “coming clean.” In the second part of Principle Four, we confess our faults to ourselves, to God and to someone else we trust.

The first *S* in CONFESS stands for STOP THE BLAME. That’s the third positive change that results from confessing our faults. It’s been said that people who can smile when something goes wrong have probably just thought of somebody to blame it on. But the truth is that we can’t find peace and serenity if we continue to blame ourselves or others. Our secrets have isolated us from each other long enough. They’ve prevented intimacy in all of our important relationships. When we confess, we accept the blame for the wrongs we’ve committed and are freed to move ahead in our recovery.

The last letter in CONFESS is the second *S*. Go to 2 Corinthians 5:19 (page 1445).

el with such great faith. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

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3 ¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

Jesus Heals Many

¹⁴When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. ¹⁵He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him.

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3 ¹⁶When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

“He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.”^a

The Cost of Following Jesus

¹⁸When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. ¹⁹Then a teacher of the law came to him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”

²⁰Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

²¹Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

²²But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Jesus Calms the Storm

²³Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵The disciples went and woke

him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!”

²⁶He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

²⁷The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

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Jesus Restores Two Demon-Possessed Men

²⁸When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes,^b two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. ²⁹“What do you want with us, Son of God?” they shouted. “Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?”

³⁰Some distance from them a large herd of pigs was feeding. ³¹The demons begged Jesus, “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs.”

³²He said to them, “Go!” So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and died in the water. ³³Those tending the pigs ran off, went into the town and reported all this, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men. ³⁴Then the whole town went out to meet Jesus. And when they saw him, they pleaded with him to leave their region.

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

9 Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over and came to his own town.

²Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”

³At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!”

⁴Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said,

^a 17 Isaiah 53:4 (see Septuagint)

^b 28 Some manuscripts *Gergesenes*; other manuscripts *Gerasenes*

CHARACTER STUDY

MY NAME IS MATTHEW

MATTHEW 9:9-13



Matthew held a lucrative post in Capernaum. He collected taxes on a major trade route that passed by the city. His profession put him in a category with "sinners" (Matthew 9:10–11), according to the religious leaders and most of the people. Tax collectors supported the Roman Empire, represented by the hated Herodian rulers who served as puppet kings in service to Rome. Matthew's profit came from coercing as much as possible from the populace, backed by the power of Roman soldiers. The people seldom saw the Roman rulers or the Herods, but they saw Matthew every day as a symbol of oppression. No wonder the tax collector was in the same category as a thief or prostitute in the minds of the people.

Ironically, although the people saw Matthew as a curse upon God's people, his name in Hebrew means "gift of Yahweh." Jesus saw through to Matthew's potential, rightly identifying him as one who could become a gift to his own people. In the same way, our Savior sees each of us as a treasure, even when others can see only our failings. Jesus not only "saw a man named Matthew" (9:9), but he called the sinner to follow him. Incredibly, Matthew immediately left his tax collector's booth to follow Jesus (see v. 9).

Matthew's recovery involved several essential actions. First, he made a break with his past. Matthew was seated, comfortable in his love of money. But at the invitation from the Messiah, he "got up" (v. 9) and left behind the tools of his sinful trade. Second, Matthew "followed" (v. 9) Jesus. Recovery is a forward process, both in outlook and in motion. Third, Matthew reached out to others who needed to meet Jesus (see v. 10). He began with other outcasts like himself. While he had left his own past behind, he never forgot how desperate he had been for the call of Christ (Principle Eight).

Matthew invited Jesus into his home for dinner and then summoned all the "ugly people" to join in his celebration of God's love. He immediately recognized the importance of sharing what he had found in Christ. In recovery, the "I" must become "we." We can't travel the road to recovery alone. The pronoun *I* never appears in the twelve steps. It's absolutely essential that we work together, never in isolation. Recovery will bring a change in our companions in two ways. We'll exchange our regular associates from those in denial to those who are walking with us on the road to recovery. But, hopefully, some of our old cronies will change too as we provide them with an example of Christ's life-changing power.

Jesus loved the crowd that filled Matthew's house and caused the pious to protest. In fact, when Jesus overheard the criticism of the Pharisees (see v. 11), he declared, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick" (v. 12). Jesus was referring to sin-sickness, not to physical ailments.

Jesus went on to share a lesson from the Old Testament with the Pharisees, who considered themselves to be the chosen instructors in God's law. He reminded them that rituals and sacrifices mean little to God in the absence of mercy (see v. 13, which includes a quote from Hosea 6:6). Celebrate Recovery is a reminder to today's churches that Jesus is at home only in places where sinners are sought out and made to feel welcome.

“Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? ⁵Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ⁶But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” ⁷Then the man got up and went home. ⁸When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

The Calling of Matthew

⁹As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

¹⁰While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

¹²On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’^a For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

¹⁴Then John’s disciples came and asked him, “How is it that we and the Pharisees fast often, but your disciples do not fast?”

¹⁵Jesus answered, “How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast.

¹⁶“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse. ¹⁷Neither do people pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman

¹⁸While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, “My daughter has just died. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live.”

¹⁹Jesus got up and went with him, and so did his disciples.

²⁰Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak. ²¹She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.”

²²Jesus turned and saw her. “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” And the woman was healed at that moment.

²³When Jesus entered the synagogue leader’s house and saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes, ²⁴he said, “Go away. The girl is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. ²⁵After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand, and she got up. ²⁶News of this spread through all that region.

Jesus Heals the Blind and the Mute

²⁷As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, “Have mercy on us, Son of David!”

²⁸When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

“Yes, Lord,” they replied.

²⁹Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you”; ³⁰and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.” ³¹But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

³²While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. ³³And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.”

^a 13 Hosea 6:6

My Name Is John

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH ALCOHOL

Please read the story of Matthew's calling in Matthew 9:9 – 13.

I was raised in a good, Christian home and trained from an early age to be a servant of God. But after graduating from seminary with a master's degree in divinity, I walked away from my faith to pursue all that the world had to offer. I was a high tech sales rep in the mainframe computer industry, where the corporate motto was "Whatever it takes!" I became ruthless in the pursuit of winning and beating the competition.

I can truly identify with Matthew. My narcissistic craving for sex, drugs and the rock-and-roll lifestyle that justified everything with the Wall Street mentality ("greed is good") knew no limits. It should come as no great surprise that I lost my way in a sea of self-indulgence and ultimately became a blackout drinker. After achieving financial success and earning all the accolades I had come to believe would make a difference, I was on the verge of losing everything that mattered to me: my wife, my little girl and my career. I had already lost any hope that I would ever find that illusive sense of fulfillment. I figured that it just wasn't meant for people like me.

But God had other plans. In 1996 my family and I started attending Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, and there I heard the simple message that I did indeed matter to God. One Sunday a man told his story in church to illustrate that God is a God of second chances. He called himself a "functional alcoholic." Those two words hit me like a ton of bricks because that's what I had become, a functional alcoholic who got up every morning to go to work, promising myself on a stack of Bibles that I'd never drink again. Yet once I got home, I'd start the process all over again until I blacked out. My little, five-foot-one wife had to put me to bed.

On June 11, 1996, I came to Celebrate Recovery because I had no place else to go. I was done. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired, and I was ready to accept whatever help somebody had to offer. Three weeks later my relationship with my Lord and Savior was restored. I found my life verse: "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). It was as though Jesus was saying, "Relax; I'm God and you're not. Trust me to take care of the things you can't. I'll show you how to live as one who is 'gentle and humble in heart'" (Matthew 11:29).

Jesus has been healing my sin addiction ever since that time. As I listen to his call to deny my agenda in favor of his plans for my life (see Mark 8:34), I find myself with a purpose for living and, finally, with a sense of fulfillment in doing what God had been calling me to do for so long. I guess it's possible to read this and doubt that a tangible miracle has taken place in my life. Some may suspect that I'm exaggerating the extent of the miracle, that I wasn't really that bad off. I don't want anyone to conclude that I had anything to do with this life change, so let me share a portion of my psychological profile taken shortly after I came into recovery:

Most people with this profile are hostile, resentful, irritable and angry. This person is despondent, argumentative, narcissistic, obnoxious and guilt ridden. A history of social maladjustment can be expected. Excessive demands may be made on others for attention and sympathy while demands by others are resented. The prognosis for whether or not therapy will be effective? POOR!

That's who I am by nature. Nevertheless, I'm happy, surrounded by friends who will be there whenever I need them, and ready to serve my Lord no matter what he asks of me. My prayer and hope is that, by reading my story, others will find the same power and hope I found when Jesus tapped me on the shoulder and urged, "Come back! I came for people like you, people who've lost their way trying to do it on their own, people who are ready to depend on me for the healing and hope they've always longed for. I'll set you free and take you on a journey that will fill your life with a sense of purpose and peace beyond anything you could ever have imagined." As he did with Matthew, Jesus simply beckoned to me: "Follow me" (Matthew 9:9). All we have to do is respond.

Sohn

³⁴But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”

The Workers Are Few

³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

10 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy,^a drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

⁹“Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts — ¹⁰no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. ¹²As you enter the home, give it your greeting. ¹³If the home is deserving, let your peace

rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

¹⁶“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. ¹⁷Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. ¹⁸On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, ²⁰for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

²¹“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ²²You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ²³When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

²⁴“The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

²⁶“So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the

^a 8 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

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ground outside your Father's care.^a ³⁰And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³²"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to turn

"a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-
in-law—

³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.^b

³⁷"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

⁴⁰"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. ⁴¹Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. ⁴²And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."

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Jesus and John the Baptist

11 After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.^c

²When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples ³to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

⁴Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy^d are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ⁶Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me."

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⁷As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. ⁹Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written:

"I will send my messenger ahead of
you,
who will prepare your way before
you."^e

¹¹Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence,^f and violent people have been raiding it. ¹³For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. ¹⁵Whoever has ears, let them hear.

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¹⁶"To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

¹⁷"We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;

^a 29 Or will; or knowledge ^b 36 Micah 7:6 ^c 1 Greek in their towns ^d 5 The Greek word traditionally translated leprosy was used for various diseases affecting the skin. ^e 10 Mal. 3:1 ^f 12 Or been forcefully advancing

MY NAME IS JOHN THE BAPTIST

MATTHEW 11:1–15



John the Baptist was a bold preacher who confronted his generation with a plainspoken call to repentance. Jesus confirmed John as a prophet and "more than a prophet" (Matthew 11:9)— John was the predicted messenger who prepared the way for the Christ. Jesus made the amazing statement, in fact, that no one had ever been born who was greater than John (see vv. 9–11). Yet John had a bout with doubt. He recognized Jesus as the Messiah, the long-awaited King of Israel, the Lamb of God. John had even heard the voice of God proclaiming that Jesus was his Son (see 3:17). Why, then, was the Messiah's messenger sitting in the dungeon of a king who had blatantly broken God's laws and who served the hated Romans? John had doubts that were fueled by big questions.

Doubt can divert us from the road to recovery. But doubt doesn't need to spell defeat. Doubt doesn't undo what God has already done in our life. But we need to do what John did with his qualms and questions: Take them to Jesus. He'll respond to us as he did to John. He'll send us messengers proclaiming his words and deeds (see 11:4). Our knowledge of what he has done in the past will confirm for us his healing, life-changing power (see v. 5). He'll commend us and our service to him (see vv. 7–15).

As great as Jesus proclaimed John to be, our Lord attached a puzzling addendum to his statement in verse 11: "Whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than [John]." John, remarkable as he was, during his own lifetime never got to enjoy the promised benefits of the kingdom. John lived and died under the law, the old Mosaic covenant. But we, as new covenant believers, enjoy many kingdom blessings John never experienced. One of the greatest of these is our unlimited, continuous access to God. With Jesus as our high priest, we can "approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). We need to reserve some time alone with God every day (Principle Seven).

When we have a bout with doubt, we can realize that we're going through a time of need. Unlike John, we don't have to send messengers to Jesus. We can take our doubts, questions, sins, needs and desires directly to him. When we do, we need to be ready for his messengers: our sponsor, accountability partner, pastor, friend or counselor. Thousands have already experienced God's life-changing power through Celebrate Recovery. Seek them out and listen to their stories. Even John needed testimonies from others to encourage him in his faith. That's why almost half of the Large Group meetings in Celebrate Recovery focus on a recovery testimony. Jesus wants you to succeed and desires to applaud you for your service, just as he did John.

we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.’

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

Woe on Unrepentant Towns

²⁰Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. ²¹“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²²But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. ²³And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.^a For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

The Father Revealed in the Son

²⁵At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

²⁷“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

12 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. ²When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”

³He answered, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. ⁵Or haven’t you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent? ⁶I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’^b you would not have condemned the innocent. ⁸For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

⁹Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, ¹⁰and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

¹¹He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

¹³Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.

God’s Chosen Servant

¹⁵Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. ¹⁶He warned them not to tell others about him. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

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^a 23 That is, the realm of the dead ^b 7 Hosea 6:6

My Name Is John

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH ABANDONMENT,
ALCOHOLISM AND SEXUAL ADDICTION

Please read the story in Matthew 11:2 – 6 of John the Baptist's struggles with doubt during his imprisonment.

Mine was a life of opposites. Abandoned and put up for adoption at the age of three, I grew up in an abusive environment where I learned to fight for survival. During my childhood I was sexually molested by a scoutmaster and deacon. As a result, I detested the church and distrusted authority figures. I had no skills for resolving anger or dealing with confusing situations.

On the other hand, school was easy for me. I could recall the material without studying. However, since I didn't know how to properly employ my intelligence, I was more disruptive than cooperative. I made friends easily. I wasn't so much drawn into the "bad crowd" as much as I developed my own wrong crowd, into which I actively recruited others.

From my first taste of hard liquor, alcohol became my friend, a painkiller to which I would return over and over again for years. My relationships were developed from pornographic models as I acted out the scripts. I thought that steeping myself in pornography was my right, as well as the manly thing to do. I certainly wanted to be a man at all costs. Whiskey fueled the desire, pornography shaped the scenario and I spiraled out of control.

Twenty years later, I found myself alone in a church pew in Memphis, Tennessee. Like John the Baptist, I recognized Jesus as the Messiah, but I was sitting, utterly dejected, in my own dungeon, battling serious doubts. I brought them to God and, just as Jesus had done for the despondent and doubting John, he graciously responded. Almost a year later, just before my 39th birthday, I accepted Christ as my Savior. Initially that decision only increased my struggles because my conscience was now actively engaged and telling me my lifestyle had to change.

Subsequently I introduced my sons and several others to Jesus. At the same time, though, I continued to struggle with my addictions. I became a deacon and an adult church school teacher, speaking in churches all over the state. I also joined a southern gospel music group that performed all over Virginia and North Carolina. All the while, I was still struggling with

infidelity, pornography and drinking. I was leading two completely separate lives and couldn't seem to stop.

On September 11, 2001, I got tied up on the phone and missed my 8:30 a.m. shuttle to the Pentagon. The events of that day assured me that God was giving me another chance. This time I was ready to do anything to change. God sent me my "messenger" (Matthew 11:10) in the form of my sister, a believer, a recovering alcoholic and a mental health worker for the state of Alabama. She convinced me that joining a recovery program was the only way I could hope to stay sober. I retired from the Pentagon, went to Alabama and started working the steps. I soon learned that the 12 Christ-centered steps of recovery are the mechanics needed for living a Christian life one day at a time. I released my resentments and made my amends — and discovered that a passion for the future was replacing the pain of my past. Now I wanted to give away this peace and joy to everyone around me.

I met Vicki, a lady from Canada. Our relationship started differently than any other I had experienced. Rigorously honest with one another from the beginning, we worked my program and attended meetings together. Several months later we realized we were in love, and for the first time in my life I understood what that really meant. A year later we were married. During a time of prayer and fasting, I realized that God was calling me to help others who were struggling. He gave specific directions, and we followed up by selling our house, relinquishing our possessions in North Carolina, leaving our family and friends and moving across the country to San Diego in answer to God's command. What I didn't know was that our new church had a Celebrate Recovery group, the ministry into which God had been directing me.

Our family members thought we were crazy, and some still do. However, I'm convinced that this is precisely where God wants me to be. God has opened many doors since our decision to follow his direction and call. I currently lead a small group in Celebrate Recovery, sponsor several others who are struggling, and attend Southern California Seminary as a MACP student, training to become a licensed counselor. I've been in recovery since 2001, but on some days I still struggle with the temptations of alcohol and pornography. However, through God's help and the principles and steps of Celebrate Recovery, I've been able to remain clean and sober throughout this entire period. God's work in my life has showcased the reality of his healing, life-changing power (see Matthew 11:5).

John



- 18 “Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the
nations.
19 He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.
20 A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not
snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to
victory.
21 In his name the nations will put their
hope.”^a

Jesus and Beelzebul

22 Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see. 23 All the people were astonished and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”

24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.”

25 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand.

26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.

28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

29 “Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can plunder his house.

30 “Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. 31 And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. 32 Anyone who speaks a word against the

Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

33 “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.

34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. 35 A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.

36 But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

The Sign of Jonah

38 Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”

39 He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here. 42 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.

43 “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. 44 Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. 45 Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is

^a 21 Isaiah 42:1-4

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5 worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

Jesus' Mother and Brothers

46 While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. 47 Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”

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8 48 He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” 49 Pointing to

his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore.

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READY LESSON [*Principle Five*]

For the previous entry in the READY lesson, go to 1 Peter 1:13–14 (page 1547).

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii–xliv.

When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, “I will return to the house I left.” When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.

MATTHEW 12:43–45

In Principle Five we need to be READY to voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in our lives and humbly ask him to remove our character defects.

The *D* in READY represents an extremely important step; it stands for DO REPLACE YOUR CHARACTER DEFECTS. We’ve spent a lot of time in the company of our old hang-ups, hurts and habits. When God removes one of these, we need to replace it with something positive, such as recovery meetings, church activities, service and/or volunteering. If we don’t, we open ourselves up to the possibility that a character defect will return.

A codependent’s major defect of character may be fear of abandonment. People who fall into this category have probably wasted a lot of time in unhealthy relationships in an unsuccessful attempt to fill a void in their life. When they start working the eight principles, and particularly when they stop spending their time in negative relationships, they find themselves with a lot of time on their hands. They need to fill that void by doing positive things that will build up their self-image rather than tear it down. In addition to working their program and attending meeting after meeting, they need to fellowship and serve with “healthy” people. They need to volunteer. In short, we need to replace our character defects with something positive. There are many opportunities to serve, both in our recovery ministry and in our church.

The last letter in READY is Y. Go to 1 John 3:9 (page 1559).

³Then he told them many things in parables, saying: “A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop — a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

¹⁰The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

¹¹He replied, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. ¹²Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ¹³This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

¹⁴In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

¹⁵For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.’^a

¹⁶But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷For

truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

¹⁸“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²²The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

²⁸“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹“‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

^a 15 Isaiah 6:9,10 (see Septuagint)

The Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast

³¹He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³²Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

³³He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds^a of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

³⁴Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. ³⁵So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the
creation of the world.”^b

The Parable of the Weeds Explained

³⁶Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴²They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

The Parable of the Net

⁴⁷“Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. ⁴⁹This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹“Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

⁵²He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

A Prophet Without Honor

⁵³When Jesus had finished these parables, he moved on from there. ⁵⁴Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked. ⁵⁵“Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? ⁵⁶Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” ⁵⁷And they took offense at him.

But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not

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^a 33 Or about 27 kilograms

^b 35 Psalm 78:2

without honor except in his own town and in his own home.”

⁵⁸And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

John the Baptist Beheaded

14 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, ²and he said to his attendants, “This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”

³Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, ⁴for John had been saying to him: “It is not lawful for you to have her.” ⁵Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet.

⁶On Herod’s birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much ⁷that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. ⁸Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.” ⁹The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted ¹⁰and had John beheaded in the prison. ¹¹His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. ¹²John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

¹³When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a remote place, and it’s already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food.”

¹⁶Jesus replied, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

¹⁷“We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered.

¹⁸“Bring them here to me,” he said. ¹⁹And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus Walks on the Water

²²Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

²⁷But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

²⁸“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

²⁹“Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

³¹Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

³²And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

³⁴When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret. ³⁵And when the men of that place recognized Jesus, they sent word

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to all the surrounding country. People brought all their sick to him ³⁶and begged him to let the sick just touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

That Which Defiles

15 Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ²“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!”

³Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’^a and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’^b ⁵But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ ⁶they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

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⁸“These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.
⁹They worship me in vain;
their teachings are merely human rules.’^c”

¹⁰Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. ¹¹What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

¹²Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?”

¹³He replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. ¹⁴Leave them; they are blind guides.^d If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

¹⁵Peter said, “Explain the parable to us.”

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¹⁶“Are you still so dull?” Jesus asked them. ¹⁷“Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? ¹⁸But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.”

The Faith of a Canaanite Woman

²¹Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²²A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly.”

²³Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, “Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.”

²⁴He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”

²⁵The woman came and knelt before him. “Lord, help me!” she said.

²⁶He replied, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

²⁷“Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

²⁸Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

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Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand

²⁹Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountain-side and sat down. ³⁰Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. ³¹The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

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^a 4 Exodus 20:12; Deut. 5:16

^b 4 Exodus 21:17; Lev. 20:9

^c 9 Isaiah 29:13

^d 14 Some manuscripts *blind guides of the blind*

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³²Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way.”

³³His disciples answered, “Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?”

³⁴“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked.

“Seven,” they replied, “and a few small fish.”

³⁵He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. ³⁶Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. ³⁷They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ³⁸The number of those who ate was four thousand men, besides women and children. ³⁹After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.

The Demand for a Sign

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

²He replied, “When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’ ³and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.” ⁴A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees

⁵When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. ⁶“Be care-

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ful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

⁷They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”

⁸Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread?”

⁹Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹¹How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹²Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah

¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?”

¹⁴They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

¹⁵“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

¹⁷Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you that you are Peter,^b and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades^c will not overcome it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be^d bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^d loosed in heaven.” ²⁰Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

^a 2,3 Some early manuscripts do not have *When evening comes . . . of the times.* ^b 18 The Greek word for *Peter* means *rock.* ^c 18 That is, the realm of the dead ^d 19 Or *will have been*

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Jesus Predicts His Death

21From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

23Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

24Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25For whoever wants to save their life^a will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. 26What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? 27For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

28“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

The Transfiguration

17 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

4Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

5While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the

cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”

6When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. 7But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don’t be afraid.” 8When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

9As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

10The disciples asked him, “Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

11Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. 12But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” 13Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

14When they came to the crowd, a man approached Jesus and knelt before him. 15“Lord, have mercy on my son,” he said. “He has seizures and is suffering greatly. He often falls into the fire or into the water. 16I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him.”

17“You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me.” 18Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of the boy, and he was healed at that moment.

19Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

20He replied, “Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” [21]^b

^a 25 The Greek word means either *life* or *soul*; also in verse 26.

^b 21 Some manuscripts include here words similar to Mark 9:29.

Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

²²When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. ²³They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life.” And the disciples were filled with grief.

The Temple Tax

²⁴After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?”

²⁵“Yes, he does,” he replied.

When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. “What do you think, Simon?” he asked. “From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes— from their own children or from others?”

²⁶“From others,” Peter answered.

“Then the children are exempt,” Jesus said to him. ²⁷“But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.”

The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven

18 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

²He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

Causing to Stumble

⁶“If anyone causes one of these little ones— those who believe in me— to

stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. ⁷Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! ⁸If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

The Parable of the Wandering Sheep

¹⁰“See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. ^[11]^a

¹²“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? ¹³And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. ¹⁴In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

Dealing With Sin in the Church

¹⁵“If your brother or sister^b sins,^c go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.^d ¹⁷If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

^a 11 Some manuscripts include here the words of Luke 19:10. ^b 15 The Greek word for *brother or sister* (*adelphos*) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in verses 21 and 35. ^c 15 Some manuscripts *sins against you* ^d 16 Deut. 19:15

¹⁸“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be^a bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^a loosed in heaven.

¹⁹“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

²²Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.^b

²³“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold^c was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶“At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ ²⁷The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.^d He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

²⁹“His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

³⁰“But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

³²“Then the master called the servant in.

‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ ³⁴In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

³⁵“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

Divorce

19 When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. ²Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

⁴“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’^e ⁵and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?^f ⁶So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

⁷“Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”

⁸Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

¹⁰The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”

¹¹Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹²For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are

^a 18 Or *will have been* ^b 22 Or *seventy times seven* ^c 24 Greek *ten thousand talents*; a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer’s wages. ^d 28 Greek *a hundred denarii*; a denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer (see 20:2). ^e 4 Gen. 1:27 ^f 5 Gen. 2:24

eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others — and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.”

The Little Children and Jesus

¹³Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them.

¹⁴Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” ¹⁵When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

The Rich and the Kingdom of God

¹⁶Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”

¹⁷“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.”

¹⁸“Which ones?” he inquired.

Jesus replied, “You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, ¹⁹honor your father and mother;^a and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’^b”

²⁰“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”

²¹Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²²When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁵When the disciples heard this, they

were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁶Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

²⁷Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?”

²⁸Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife^c or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ²He agreed to pay them a denarius^d for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

³“About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. ⁴He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ ⁵So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. ⁶About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

⁷“‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

⁸“When evening came, the owner of

^a 19 Exodus 20:12-16; Deut. 5:16-20 ^b 19 Lev. 19:18

^d 2 A denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer.

^c 29 Some manuscripts do not have *or wife*.



CHARACTER STUDY

MY NAME IS THE RICH YOUNG MAN

MATTHEW 19:16–26

This young man is a source for understanding some of the lies that keep us from beginning recovery. The same lies will knock us off the recovery road. The first lie is “I can do it on my own.” This young man asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). He assumed that he had at his disposal the power to do whatever was necessary and wanted to know what he should strive next to achieve. Many of us can relate to this approach. We’ve piled one accomplishment on top of another for years. We may have seen this tactic as a way to gain love—to block out our inner message of insecurity. Jesus pointed out first to this young seeker that only God is good. Then he spoke to him in terms of the Mosaic Law: “If you want to enter life, keep the commandments” (v. 17). In other words, only God is good, so do what God demands as an expression of your faith.

Jesus wasn’t promoting legalism as a path to salvation. He was revealing that this confident young man couldn’t accomplish the one good thing necessary for eternal life: finding faith in Jesus Christ. If we really have faith, we’ll follow his commands. Jesus in effect set up a test of this seeker’s faith: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (v. 21). This frustrated seeker went away sad, unable to part with his extensive wealth (see v. 22). This reveals a second lie that endangers our recovery: “I can withhold some areas of my life from the control of Jesus.”

Recovery isn’t a program we fit neatly into some available niche in our old life. Recovery is all about living an entirely new life. Recovery doesn’t allow us—because Jesus doesn’t allow us—to stop short of genuine life change. The principles of recovery aren’t props we arrange on the stage of our life. Instead, they make us a screen upon which God projects his own glory—the truth about himself and his power to transform lives. Representing God accurately is the goal of recovery, and that requires uncompromising obedience. Let’s not fool ourselves; partial or delayed obedience is simply disobedience.

Real recovery may seem impossible right now. But Jesus wants to remind us of the truth that alone makes recovery possible: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (v. 26). Principle Three calls each of us to consciously choose to commit *all* our life and will to Christ’s care and control. Stop short of this, and we too will walk away sad. Hebrews 12:1 urges us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles . . . run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” The operative word here is “everything.”

the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

⁹“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹²‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

¹³“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

¹⁶“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

¹⁷Now Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the Twelve aside and said to them, ¹⁸“We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!”

A Mother’s Request

²⁰Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

²¹“What is it you want?” he asked.

She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.”

²²“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said to them. “Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?”

“We can,” they answered.

²³Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.”

²⁴When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — ²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Two Blind Men Receive Sight

²⁹As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. ³⁰Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

³¹The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”

³²Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³³“Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight.”

³⁴Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King

21 As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, ²saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. ³If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

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⁵“Say to Daughter Zion,
‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a
donkey.’”^a

⁶The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. ⁷They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. ⁸A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. ⁹The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna^b to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name
of the Lord!”^c

“Hosanna^b in the highest heaven!”

¹⁰When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?”

¹¹The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Jesus at the Temple

¹²Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³“It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,^d but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’^e”

¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.

¹⁶“Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him.

“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read,

“‘From the lips of children and infants
you, Lord, have called forth your
praise’?”^f”

¹⁷And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.

Jesus Curses a Fig Tree

¹⁸Early in the morning, as Jesus was on his way back to the city, he was hungry. ¹⁹Seeing a fig tree by the road, he went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves. Then he said to it, “May you never bear fruit again!” Immediately the tree withered.

²⁰When the disciples saw this, they were amazed. “How did the fig tree wither so quickly?” they asked.

²¹Jesus replied, “Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. ²²If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.”

The Authority of Jesus Questioned

²³Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

²⁴Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ²⁵John’s baptism — where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?”

They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ ²⁶But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ — we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

²⁷So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

^a 5 Zech. 9:9 ^b 9 A Hebrew expression meaning “Save!” which became an exclamation of praise; also in verse 15
^c 9 Psalm 118:25,26 ^d 13 Isaiah 56:7 ^e 13 Jer. 7:11 ^f 16 Psalm 8:2 (see Septuagint)

My Name Is Paul

I'M A BELIEVER WHO STRUGGLES WITH FINANCES
AND WORKAHOLISM

Please read the story of the encounter between Jesus and the rich young man in Matthew 19:16–26.

When I was about eight years old, I became increasingly aware that my dad wasn't around much; he worked hard, and his hours were long. My mom was raising five children with very little physical help from Dad; his role was that of breadwinner, of self-employed, sole provider. We moved around the country as job opportunities dictated. Each time we moved, he put in even longer hours, and his company continued to do better and better. He was achieving remarkable success and doing it single-handedly.

At a youth retreat when I was 15 years old, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord. I wasn't connected to a church, though, so when I returned home, I had no one to nurture or mentor me in the things of the Lord. I internalized my newfound faith and went about life as before.

My first job after graduating from college with a business degree was in the restaurant business. I worked five or six days a week, 12 to 14 hours per day, and was promoted quickly. Like my dad, and like the rich young man of Mark 10, I was relying on myself. As I progressed in my career, I ended up working with my dad in the family construction business.

Business was booming, and I continued working long hours and weekends. The overtime checks were great and the year-end bonuses were unbelievable. *I* was the rich young man. By the world's standards our family was living the American dream — but not in God's economy.

Then the housing bubble burst, and construction crawled to a virtual standstill. The bonuses ended, the overtime evaporated and my salary was cut by 75 percent. My wife and I got further and further behind on our payments. Our credit cards were maxed out, our house payment was substantial, and the cost of keeping up with the neighbors was staggering. My answer was to ignore these negative signs. I assured myself that this was only an economic slowdown, not a recession.

I had always believed I could handle my finances on my own. I looked into a second job, but this would have been like bailing out the Titanic with a teacup. We were forced to sell our house before the lender could begin foreclosure proceedings. Having lost the privilege of owning a home, we began renting. I was angry, hurt, frightened, depressed and deflated.

I had been holding back on God in terms of relinquishing control over this one area of my life. When at long last I made the decision to do so, God in return gave me a verse about tithing (donating 10 percent of our money). Malachi 3:10 counsels us to " 'bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.' "

This was *not* what I wanted to hear, and I reacted to God in frustration: "How can I give you 10 percent when we can't even meet our monthly expenses? You're asking the impossible." All the while, though, I recognized with a sinking heart that if I really had faith I would follow his commands. I needed to humble myself before the Lord in order to give him the opportunity to lift me up. I needed to internalize the truth: "With man such tithing is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God" (Matthew 19:26, author's paraphrase).

It wasn't until I began attending Celebrate Recovery that I stopped denying and running from my financial situation. And when I turned over my life and will to the care of God, I began to heal. The apostle Paul entreats us in Romans 12:1: "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God — this is your true and proper worship." Once I did that, God changed my focus in life from success (a worldly value) to significance (a godly value).

I did as God asked and started tithing. That first check was tough because my wife and I did it on pure faith that God is precisely who he says he is. But God began working miracles in our lives, and over the next three years our debt load gradually disappeared.

Today I still work hard at the family business. But my motivation is different. I have come to realize that God wants more for me than success at work. I find significance in serving him at Celebrate Recovery: as a small group leader, a sponsor and a caring friend reaching out to the newcomer.

On a daily basis I consciously embrace Hebrews 12:1: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."



Paul

The Parable of the Two Sons

28“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

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29“‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

30“Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

31“Which of the two did what his father wanted?”

“The first,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. 32For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

The Parable of the Tenants

33“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. 34When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

35“‘The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. 36Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. 37Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said.

38“‘But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ 39So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

40“‘Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’

41“‘He will bring those wretches to a

wretched end,’” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.”

42Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

“‘The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes’^a?

43“‘Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. 44Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.’^b

45When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. 46They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

22 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying: 2“‘The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. 3He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come.

4“‘Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’

5“‘But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. 6The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. 7The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.

8“‘Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited

^a 42 Psalm 118:22,23

^b 44 Some manuscripts do not have verse 44.

did not deserve to come. ⁹So go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ ¹⁰So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹²He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless.

¹³“Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

¹⁴“For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar

¹⁵Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax^a to Caesar or not?”

¹⁸But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, ²⁰and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

²¹“Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

²²When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

Marriage at the Resurrection

²³That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with

a question. ²⁴“Teacher,” they said, “Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for him. ²⁵Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. ²⁶The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. ²⁷Finally, the woman died. ²⁸Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?”

²⁹Jesus replied, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹But about the resurrection of the dead — have you not read what God said to you, ³²‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’^b? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

³³When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

The Greatest Commandment

³⁴Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

³⁷Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’^c ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^d ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

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Whose Son Is the Messiah?

⁴¹While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴²“What do you think about the Messiah? Whose son is he?”

“The son of David,” they replied.

⁴³He said to them, “How is it then that

^a 17 A special tax levied on subject peoples, not on Roman citizens

^b 32 Exodus 3:6

^c 37 Deut. 6:5

^d 39 Lev. 19:18

David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord’? For he says,

44 “The Lord said to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet.”^a

45 If then David calls him ‘Lord,’ how can he be his son?” 46 No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

^a 44 Psalm 110:1

A Warning Against Hypocrisy

23 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ²“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. ³So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. ⁴They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

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SPIRITUAL INVENTORY LESSON [Principle Seven]

This is the first and only page of the DAILY INVENTORY lesson.

For a discussion of Principles One through Eight and a listing of their related lessons, go to pages xvii – xlv.

*Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*

*This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it:
‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets
hang on these two commandments.”*

MATTHEW 22:37–40

In Principle Seven we reserve a daily quiet time with God for self-examination, Bible reading and prayer in order to get to know God and his will for our lives and to gain the power to follow his will. As we work this principle, we begin the journey of applying and living what we’ve discovered in the first six principles. We live daily in humility — as well as in reality, not in denial. We’ve done our best to amend our past. Through God’s guidance we can now make choices about the emotions that will affect our ongoing thinking and actions. We can start to take *action* — positive action — instead of operating in a mode of continual *reaction*.

In Principle Seven we desire to grow daily in our new relationships with Jesus Christ and others. Instead of attempting to be in control of every situation and every person with whom we come into contact, or instead of spinning out of control ourselves, we’re starting to exhibit self-control, living the way God wants us to. Remember that “self under control” is what we’re initially seeking but that self under God’s control is what we’re ultimately striving for.

Jesus has provided us with a daily checklist for our new lifestyle. It’s called the Great Commandment, and we can find it in Matthew 22:37–40. When we do our daily personal inventory, we need to ask ourselves, “Today, did my actions reflect what the second greatest commandment requires? Did I truly love my neighbor [others] as much as I love myself?”

⁵“Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries^a wide and the tassels on their garments long; ⁶they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.

⁸“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. ⁹And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is

in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

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Seven Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

¹³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the

^a 5 That is, boxes containing Scripture verses, worn on forehead and arm

As we live out these two commandments by putting the principles and steps into action in our lives, we become more and more like Christ. We become active doers of God’s Word, not just passive listeners. James 1:22 states this need clearly: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

In Principle Seven we actually do three different inventories:

1. *An ongoing inventory.* We can maintain an ongoing inventory throughout the day. The best time to admit we’re wrong is at the exact moment we’re made aware of it. Why wait?
2. *A daily inventory.* At the end of each day we can look back over our daily activities, both the good and the bad, paying special attention to points at which we might have harmed someone else or reacted out of anger or fear. But once again, we need to remember to keep our daily inventory balanced. We should be sure to include the things we did right throughout the day, no matter how easy they may be to overlook or discount.
3. *A periodic inventory.* We should take a periodic inventory every 90 days or so. We may even want to get away on a mini retreat. We should bring our daily journals with us and pray as we read through the entries for the last 90 days. We should ask God to show us areas in our lives in which we can improve during the next 90 days. But we should also remember to identify and celebrate the victories we’ve experienced.

Principle Seven is so important. It also includes Step Eleven of the Christ-centered 12 steps.

Step Eleven: We’ve sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying for knowledge of his will for us, as well as for the power to carry out that will.

We should remember to summarize the events of our day in our journals. By diligently maintaining ongoing, daily and periodic journal entries, we can work the first part of Principle Seven to the best of our abilities. With God’s help we can keep our side of the street clean.

The DAILY INVENTORY lesson is complete on this page.

door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. ^[14]^a

¹⁵“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

¹⁶“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.’ ¹⁷You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? ¹⁸You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.’ ¹⁹You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. ²²And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.

²³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

²⁵“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

²⁷“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything un-

clean. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

²⁹“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. ³⁰And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

³³“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? ³⁴Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. ³⁵And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. ³⁶Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.

³⁷“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. ³⁸Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’^b”

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

24 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ²“Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

^a 14 Some manuscripts include here words similar to Mark 12:40 and Luke 20:47.

^b 39 Psalm 118:26

³As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

⁴Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains.

⁹“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹²Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’^a spoken of through the prophet Daniel — let the reader understand — ¹⁶then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁹How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again.

²²“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of

the elect those days will be shortened. ²³At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵See, I have told you ahead of time.

²⁶“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹“Immediately after the distress of those days

“the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be
shaken.”^b

³⁰“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth^c will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.^d ³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³²“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it^e is near, right at the door. ³⁴Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Unknown

³⁶“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor

^a 15 Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11

^b 29 Isaiah 13:10; 34:4

^c 30 Or *the tribes of the land*

^d 30 See Daniel 7:13-14.

^e 33 Or *he*

the Son,^a but only the Father. ³⁷As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

⁴²“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

⁴⁵“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ ⁴⁹and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

25 “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them

were foolish and five were wise. ³The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. ⁵The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

⁶“At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

⁷“Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

⁹“‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

¹⁰“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

¹¹“Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

¹²“But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

¹³“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

The Parable of the Bags of Gold

¹⁴“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,^b each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

¹⁹“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five.

^a 36 Some manuscripts do not have *nor the Son*. ^b 15 Greek *five talents . . . two talents . . . one talent*; also throughout this parable; a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer’s wage.

‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

²¹“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²²“The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

²³“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

²⁴“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. ²⁵So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

²⁶“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.’

²⁸“So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. ²⁹For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. ³⁰And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

The Sheep and the Goats

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

³⁴“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

³⁷“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

⁴⁰“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

⁴¹“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

⁴⁴“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

⁴⁵“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

⁴⁶“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

The Plot Against Jesus

26 When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ²“As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ⁵“But not during the festival,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.”

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

⁶While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, ⁷a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

⁸When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. ⁹“This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.”

¹⁰Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹The poor you will always have with you,^a but you will not always have me. ¹²When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

¹⁴Then one of the Twelve — the one called Judas Iscariot — went to the chief priests ¹⁵and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

The Last Supper

¹⁷On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

¹⁸He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to

celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” ¹⁹So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

²⁰When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

²²They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?”

²³Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

²⁵Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?”

Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

²⁷Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸This is my blood of the^b covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

³⁰When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

³¹Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

“I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep of the flock will be
scattered.”^c

³²But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

^a 11 See Deut. 15:11.

^b 28 Some manuscripts *the new*

^c 31 Zech. 13:7

³³Peter replied, “Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.”

³⁴“Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.”

³⁵But Peter declared, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the other disciples said the same.

Gethsemane

³⁶Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. ³⁸Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”

7 **8** ³⁹Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

4 **5** ⁴⁰Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. ⁴¹“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

7 **8** ⁴²He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

⁴³When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

⁴⁵Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

Jesus Arrested

⁴⁷While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large

crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. ⁴⁸Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.” ⁴⁹Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.

⁵⁰Jesus replied, “Do what you came for, friend.”^a

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁵¹With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁵²“Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. ⁵³Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”

⁵⁵In that hour Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Jesus Before the Sanhedrin

⁵⁷Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. ⁵⁸But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

⁵⁹The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. ⁶⁰But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

Finally two came forward ⁶¹and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

^a 50 Or “Why have you come, friend?”

⁶²Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” ⁶³But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

⁶⁴“You have said so,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”^a

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶What do you think?”

“He is worthy of death,” they answered.

⁶⁷Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him ⁶⁸and said, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

Peter Disowns Jesus

⁶⁹Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. “You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

⁷⁰But he denied it before them all. “I don’t know what you’re talking about,” he said.

⁷¹Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

⁷²He denied it again, with an oath: “I don’t know the man!”

⁷³After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

⁷⁴Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know the man!”

Immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: “Before the rooster crows, you will

disown me three times.” And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Judas Hangs Himself

27 Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. ²So they bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate the governor.

³When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. ⁴“I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.”

“What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.”

⁵So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

⁶The chief priests picked up the coins and said, “It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money.” ⁷So they decided to use the money to buy the potter’s field as a burial place for foreigners. ⁸That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price set on him by the people of Israel, ¹⁰and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me.”^b

Jesus Before Pilate

¹¹Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

¹²When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. ¹³Then Pilate asked him, “Don’t you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?” ¹⁴But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge — to the great amazement of the governor.

¹⁵Now it was the governor’s custom at

^a 64 See Psalm 110:1; Daniel 7:13. ^b 10 See Zech. 11:12,13; Jer. 19:1-13; 32:6-9.

the festival to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. ¹⁶At that time they had a well-known prisoner whose name was Jesus^a Barabbas. ¹⁷So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, “Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus who is called the Messiah?” ¹⁸For he knew it was out of self-interest that they had handed Jesus over to him.

¹⁹While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.”

²⁰But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

²¹“Which of the two do you want me to release to you?” asked the governor.

“Barabbas,” they answered.

²²“What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called the Messiah?” Pilate asked.

They all answered, “Crucify him!”

²³“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

²⁴When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!”

²⁵All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!”

²⁶Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

²⁷Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. ²⁸They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt

in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. ³⁰They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. ³¹After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

³²As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, and they forced him to carry the cross. ³³They came to a place called Golgotha (which means “the place of the skull”). ³⁴There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it. ³⁵When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. ³⁶And sitting down, they kept watch over him there. ³⁷Above his head they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³⁸Two rebels were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁹Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads ⁴⁰and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” ⁴¹In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. ⁴²“He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” ⁴⁴In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁵From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eli, Eli,^b lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).^c

^a 16 Many manuscripts do not have *Jesus*; also in verse 17.

^b 46 Some manuscripts *Eloi, Eloi* ^c 46 Psalm 22:1

⁴⁷When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “He’s calling Elijah.”

⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink.

⁴⁹The rest said, “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

⁵⁰And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split ⁵²and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and^a went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

⁵⁴When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”

⁵⁵Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs.

⁵⁶Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph,^b and the mother of Zebedee’s sons.

The Burial of Jesus

⁵⁷As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus.

⁵⁸Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him.

⁵⁹Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

The Guard at the Tomb

⁶²The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. ⁶³“Sir,” they said, “we

remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ ⁶⁴So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.”

⁶⁵“Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.”

⁶⁶So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Jesus Has Risen

28 After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.

²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”

⁸So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”

The Guards’ Report

¹¹While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and

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^a 53 Or tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they ^b 56 Greek *Joses*, a variant of *Joseph*

reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ ¹⁴If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” ¹⁵So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

The Great Commission

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

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