

*The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

■ GENESIS 6:5 ESV

*Reminder of*  
THE SINFULNESS  
of man

APRIL 2015

*The Lord saw that the  
wickedness of man was  
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that every intention of the  
thoughts of his heart was  
only evil continually.*

**GENESIS 6:5 ESV**

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**COVENANT** EFC

# 2015 Memory Focus

FROM GENESIS (ESV)

## JANUARY

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

**Genesis 1:1**

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## FEBRUARY

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God  
He created him; male and female He created them.

**Genesis 1:27**

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## MARCH

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

**Genesis 1:28**

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## APRIL

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

**Genesis 6:5**

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## MAY

“I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

**Genesis 12:3**

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## JUNE

“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?”

**Genesis 18:25**

## JULY

He said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”

**Genesis 22:2**

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## AUGUST

“I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that You have shown to Your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.”

**Genesis 32:10**

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## SEPTEMBER

And there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him when he fled from his brother.

**Genesis 35:7**

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## OCTOBER

“He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”

**Genesis 39:9**

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## NOVEMBER

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

**Genesis 49:10**

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## DECEMBER

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

**Genesis 50:20**

# Foreword

BY SENIOR  
PASTORS

# 2015

*marks our Jubilee Year as a nation. God is the ultimate reason for Singapore's 50 years of peace and prosperity, safety and security, shalom and success. Indeed God alone deserves all praise, honour and thanksgiving for all the blessings from above!*

Jubilee has been called a super-Sabbath. God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way. Those who are intentional about a stronger foundation, a closer walk and a deeper life. Those who are tired of their hit-and-run, hide-and-see, touch-and-go relationship with Him. This Jubilee Year, will you intentionally and zealously commit yourself to be among the first fruits of this new Jubilee generation by scheduling personal time alone with God?

Psalm 1:2-3 speaks of the blessed person as one whose "delight is in the law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers".

The Psalmist finds great joy in relating to the Word of God...

He meditates upon the Word when day comes and when night falls...

Far beyond outward prosperity, the Psalmist desires the inward prosperity of his soul...

We invite you to take this year to grow deeper in faith and in His Word. Deal decisively with distractions in your life. Cut yourself off from habits and modern gadgets that displace communion with God. Fast from social media. Overhaul your schedule. Remove activities that desensitise you to the gentle promptings of the Spirit.

There is a dailyness in discipleship – soaking daily in His Word, applying His truth, reaping the fruits and passing them on.

Some years ago when Jerry Bridges was in Singapore, he talked about encountering God daily in the Word and especially the Gospel. When asked what it was like, Jerry said, "God always shows up."

What an assurance! This Jubilee Year 2015, draw near to Him. Linger in His presence. Allow Him to refresh you, renew you and restore you – a people prepared for the Day of His Visitation.

Jesus is Our Jubilee!

***Ps Tony Yeo and Ps Tan Kay Kiong***

God is looking for devoted disciples who flee from *clamour, hurry and crowds* and cultivate the habit of abiding in God's Word, delighting in God's will and walking in God's way.

# Guide to Using This Devotional Journal

## 1 Prepare your heart in God's presence

- Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)
- Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

*The English Standard Version (ESV) is the default Bible version unless otherwise specified.*

## 2 Allow God to S.O.A.P. you with His Word and Spirit

- **Scripture** – *Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.*

- **Observation** – *Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You can use the guiding questions provided.*

### What's New in 2015?

A "Deeper Reflection" section has been introduced to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.

- **Application** – *Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.*
- **Prayer** – *Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.*

### What's New in 2015?

- Suggested prayers are included twice weekly to serve as an aid to those who may find them helpful in their prayer response.
- On Sundays, you may want to meditate on the Psalms, the Gospel or the Scripture passage of the sermon. This may be followed by reviewing and reflecting on the past week and then responding in prayer. Examining your life is essential in your faith journey as a redeemed disciple of Christ.

February  
2015

# Worship Songs

## TEACH ME TO WORSHIP YOU

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Teach me to worship You  
Teach me to adore You  
I want to love You  
With my whole being  
To learn to praise Your name  
Each day to do the same  
Teach me O Lord the way  
To worship You

I want to worship You  
I want to adore You  
I want to love You  
With my whole being  
To forsake my sinful ways  
To look upon Your face  
And understand Your grace  
O Lord my God

*Words & Music: Li Huan Quek*

## 10,000 REASONS (BLESS THE LORD)

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### Chorus 1

Bless the Lord O my soul  
O my soul  
Worship His holy name  
Sing like never before  
O my soul  
I'll worship Your holy name

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning  
It's time to sing Your song again  
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me  
Let me be singing when the evening comes

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger  
Your name is great and Your heart is kind  
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing  
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

And on that day when my strength is failing  
The end draws near and my time has come  
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending  
Ten thousand years and then forevermore

### (Ending)

Worship Your holy name  
Lord I'll worship Your holy name

*Word & Music: Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman*

*Year & Publisher: © 2011 Said And Done Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))*

*sixsteps Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))*

*Thankyou Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))*

*worshiptogether.com songs (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))*

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## GIVE ME JESUS

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In the morning when I rise  
 In the morning when I rise  
 In the morning when I rise  
 Give me Jesus

### Chorus 1

Give me Jesus give me Jesus  
 You can have all this world  
 But give me Jesus

And when I am alone  
 Oh and when I am alone  
 And when I am alone  
 Give me Jesus

And when I come to die  
 Oh and when I come to die  
 And when I come to die  
 Give me Jesus

### Chorus 2

Give me Jesus give me Jesus  
 You can have all this world  
 You can have all this world  
 You can have all this world but give me Jesus

*Words & Music: Fernando Ortega*

*Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain; Music: 2000 DeJamesolo Music  
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 (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))  
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## BE THOU MY VISION

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Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart  
 Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art  
 Thou my best thought, by day or by night  
 Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word  
 I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord  
 Thou my great Father, and I Thy true son  
 Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise  
 Thou mine inheritance, now and always  
 Thou and Thou only, first in my heart  
 High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art

### Chorus

Oh, God, be my everything, be my delight  
 Be Jesus, my glory My soul's satisfied  
 Oh, God, be my everything, be my delight  
 Be Jesus, my glory My soul's satisfied

High King of heaven, my victory won  
 May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun  
 Heart of my own heart, whatever befall  
 Still be my vision, O Ruler of all

*"Be Thou My Vision" Words & Music: Eleanor Henrietta Hull | Mary Elizabeth Byrne*

*Year & Publisher: © Words: Public Domain  
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## THE LOVE OF GOD

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The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell  
It goes beyond the highest star  
And reaches to the lowest hell

The guilty pair bowed down with care  
God gave His Son to win  
His erring child He reconciled  
And pardoned from His sin

### Chorus

O love of God how rich and pure  
How measureless and strong  
It shall forevermore endure  
The saints and angels' song

### Verse 2

When years of time shall pass away  
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall  
When men who here refuse to pray  
On rocks and hills and mountains call

God's love so sure shall still endure  
All measureless and strong  
Redeeming grace to Adam's race  
The saints and angels' song

### Verse 3

Could we with ink the ocean fill  
And were the skies of parchment made  
Were every stalk on earth a quill  
And every man a scribe by trade

To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole  
Though stretched from sky to sky

*Words & Music: Frederick Martin Lehman | Meir Ben Isaac Nehorai*  
*Year & Publisher: © Words: 1917, Renewed 1945 Nazarene Publishing House*  
*(Admin. by Music Services, Inc.); Music: 1917, Renewed 1945 Nazarene Publishing House*  
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## COME HOLY SPIRIT

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Come Holy Spirit fall on me now  
I need Your anointing  
Come in Your power  
I love You Holy Spirit  
You're captivating my soul  
And every day I grow to love You more

### Chorus

I'm reaching for Your heart  
You hold my life in Your hand  
Drawing me closer to You  
I feel Your power renew

Nothing compares to this place  
Where I can see You face to face  
I worship You in spirit and in truth

*Year & Publisher: City Harvest Church*

## MAKE A CERTAIN BREAKTHROUGH

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In my life of searching  
For the plain and simple way,  
Many paths were so winding,  
The roads were never straight

Then the Spirit of God broke through  
And healed my broken wings  
And showed me the way into His heart

### Chorus

And I know that God is leading  
In a clear and certain way  
My one life for Your purpose, Jesus  
I offer up this day

To follow You completely  
To do all that You say

Cleanse my life, fill me up  
And use me this day  
Make a certain breakthrough  
Make it today

In these days of danger  
Lord, we rest upon Your grace  
With Your tender and skillful hands  
You shape this stubborn clay  
Yes You calm my inmost being, giving courage to hope again  
And to build this one life in power and faith

*Words & Music: Ps Ann Chan, Ruth Ling  
Year Publisher: Feb 20016 @ CEFC*

## FOREVER

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Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King,  
His love endures forever  
For He is good, He is above all things  
His love endures forever  
Sing praise, sing praise

With a mighty hand and an outstretched arm  
His love endures forever  
For a life that's been reborn  
His love endures forever

Sing praise, sing praise  
Sing praise, sing praise

### Chorus

Forever God is faithful  
Forever God is strong  
Forever God is with us  
Forever and ever

From the rising to the setting sun  
His love endures forever  
And by the grace of God we will carry on  
His love endures forever  
Sing praise, sing praise  
Sing praise, sing praise

### Bridge

His love endures forever  
His love endures forever  
His love endures forever  
Forever

*Words & Music: Chris Tomlin  
Year & Publisher: © 2001 sixsteps Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)  
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## PREPARE THE WAY

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He has come  
To bring light into the darkness  
He has come  
To bring freedom to the captives

He has come  
To restore the broken-hearted  
It's time to proclaim  
The year of the Lord

### Chorus

Prepare the way  
Prepare the way for our Redeemer  
Prepare the way  
Prepare the way for our Restorer

Make ready your heart  
Make ready your home  
Make ready the people of God  
Prepare the way

He has come  
To bring hope to the hopeless  
He has come  
To comfort all who mourn

He has come  
To heal our every sickness  
It's time to proclaim  
The year of the Lord

Words & Music: Darrell Evans | Eric Nuzum  
Year & Publisher: © 1999 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by EMI Christian Music Publishing)  
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## AARONIC BENEDICTION

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### Verse 1

May the Lord, may the Lord bless and keep you  
May His grace and His face shine upon you  
May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you  
And give you peace  
And give you peace

### Verse 2

Y'varech'cha Adonai v'yishm'recha  
Yaer panav alecha vichuneka  
Yisa Adonai panav alecha  
V'yaseml'cha shalom v'yaseml'cha shalom

### Bridge

This is the way  
You shall be blessed  
From day to day  
He'll be your rest

### Ending

And give you peace  
And give you peace

"Aaronic Benediction" Words & Music by Misha Goetz  
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# The Church Beyond

■ FOCUS OF THE MONTH:

## **REFLECTIONS FROM THE NEXT GENERATION IN MISSIONS**

By Priscilla Samuel, ONE80 Missions Trip Member

It was the fourth day of construction work in the village of Bahareduk. As the sun beat down on our backs, I paused in my shovelling of cement and surveyed the small construction site we were standing on. I saw the exhausted, sunburnt faces of my young teammates, and a fleeting thought crossed my mind. How did we get ourselves into this?

We were totally out of our element as we worked with YWAM to help build houses in this remote village, carrying logs of timber, levelling foundations and mixing cement. Being out of our element was definitely a theme of the trip. Other than the hard labour, we also got to experience a sense of discomfort as we did house visits to minister to people, share the gospel and our testimonies, and pray for people suffering from illnesses. But as the trip progressed, it was precisely in these moments of discomfort that God nudged us out of our apathy into a little more compassion, a little more awareness of Him, a little more hope for the people. Each of our team members had the privilege of this experience, sharing how in times of helplessness God moved to show us how real He is. We got to experience faith in action.

Many times, we bill youth missions trips as an adventure – driving down rocky mountain roads, eating exotic food, having a car breakdown in the middle of nowhere and playing games with village children. This is certainly true, but as we experienced on this trip, sometimes the greatest adventure happen in our hearts when God decides to totally turn what we expect upside down and show us life as we have never seen it before.

Missions is a precious opportunity for young people to encounter God away from the illusory supports that life in Singapore provides. This is real life – life that is lived in simple, child-like dependence on God. This is real life – life where we catch a glimpse of His heartbeat for a world much larger than our own. One of my greatest joys on this trip was watching this already outstanding group of young people have their eyes opened wider and hearts enlarged for the people of Timor who have such different lives from our own. This trip was just the beginning for many of them to explore their role in God's call to global missions, and we are praying that each of them finds his/her station and continue to serve God faithfully in the years to come.

### PRAY

- For each young person (in Covenant EFC and beyond) to hear and obey the call to global missions.
- For more adults to partner with these young people to help them on this journey (e.g. lead short-term missions trips, facilitate training and debriefs, provide resources for youth missions trips, etc.)
- For God to establish His kingdom here on earth as we remain faithful in these small things.

*One generation shall commend  
Your works to another, and  
shall declare Your mighty acts.*

**PSALM 145:4 (NIV)**



April 1  
Wednesday  
2015

# Seeing Jesus: Glory

## ■ Scripture

John 1:1-2, 14

### ■ Observation

What was the glory that John saw in Jesus (vv. 1-2, 14)?

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### Deeper Reflection

The glory of Jesus and of God is a key theological idea in the Gospel of John. Both the noun and verb together occur 42 times in John. The Word who is God (v. 1) “became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory” (v. 14). The glory of Jesus is God revealing Himself as “Jesus of Nazareth” (Jn 1:45), “the Carpenter of Nazareth”<sup>1</sup> of complete insignificance – “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (Jn 1:46). The glory of God is manifested in the humility of God. “We do not want people to miss our greatness. Even though our circle be a lowly one, we want all the kudos and the credit to which we are entitled... We insist on being recognised and are upset when people do not accept us for what we think we are... God is not like that. Real greatness does not need to assert itself. Real glory is not to be found in pomp and circumstance and pageantry and show.”<sup>2</sup> “True glory is seen in lowly service, and John sees it in every moment of Jesus’ lowly life.”<sup>3</sup> Do you see Jesus’ glory?

## ■ Application

How should I respond if I see the glory of Jesus of Nazareth?

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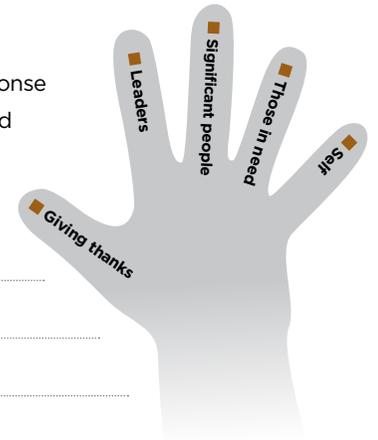
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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris, Reflections on the Gospel of John (Hendrickson, 2000), 21  
<sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, 23  
<sup>3</sup> Leon Morris, 24

April 2  
Thursday  
2015

## Seeing Jesus: Control

### ■ Scripture

John 18:33-36; 19:8-12, 15-16

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about the issue of control in the interaction between Jesus and Pontius Pilate (vv. 18:33-36; 19:8-12, 15-16)?

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### Deeper Reflection

The Greek word *paradidomi*, is a key word in the Gospel of John repeated 15 times. It translates as “betray”, “handover”, “give up”, and is only used in reference to Jesus. In all occurrences of the word except one, Jesus was in the passive position, on the receiving end of the *paradidomi* actions, which were human and evil. Put it in another way: Jesus was under the control of evil human beings. He was “betrayed” by Judas Iscariot to the religious leaders (Jn 18:2, 5), who in turn “handed Him over” to Pontius Pilate (Jn 18:30, 35, 36; 19:11), who then “handed Him over... to be crucified” (vv. 15-16). We see in the crucified Christ, with all His limbs nailed to the cross, a picture of a “helpless” God, totally passive, totally controlled by evil human beings. But in reality, it was Jesus who gave away His control over His life to His Father’s will (Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 17:4). The only active *paradidomi* in Jesus was when He “gave up His spirit” and uttered “It is finished!” (Jn 19:30). Jesus was totally secure when He gave away His control, because every *paradidomi* “had been given from Above” (v. 11). Do we not often want to be in control? Follow the **crucified Christ** (cf. 1 Co 2:2).

### ■ Application

What area(s) in my life do I need to give away control like Jesus did?

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### ■ Prayer

Lord Jesus, I surrender to You my propensity to want to be in control, as that means living a self-centred and self-driven life. Help me to be like You, O **crucified Christ**, that living my life is doing our Father’s will. For in this way, even when things go out of control in my life or when I am under the control of others, I can still find the true security and freedom in the will of God. Amen.



April 3  
Friday  
2015

# Seeing Jesus: Majesty

## ■ Scripture

John 12:12-15; 19:17-20

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about “Behold, your King” in verses 12 to 15 and 19:17 to 20?

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### Deeper Reflection

Jesus entered Jerusalem as “the King of Israel” (vv. 12-13). But little did anyone know that this King would become a crucified King. The glorious “Behold, your King” which is from God (Jn 12:14-15) became the inglorious “Behold, your King!” declared by Pontius Pilate, who asked the people, “Shall I crucify your King?” (Jn 19:14-15). We must not miss God revealing Himself in Jesus as King on the cross that John is pointing to us. What kind of King is Jesus? Jesus is a **humble King**. The King on the cross is “Jesus the Nazarene” (v. 19). While the inscription on the cross was evil in nature, we must not miss the irony in John’s theological twist. “Jesus the Nazarene” is in reality the only true King. Jesus is a **humiliated King**. The cross is a humiliation from the world. Suffering the humiliation is the **hidden King**. The King remains hidden until He returns, even though He is now the King of kings (Rev 17:14). Until then we follow this King loyally in His humility, His humiliation and His hiddenness in a world that says “We have no king but Caesar” (Jn 19:15).

## ■ Application

How will I follow the King loyally in His humility, His humiliation and His hiddenness?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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April 4  
Saturday  
2015

# Seeing Jesus: Resurrection

## ■ Scripture

John 11:20-27, 37

### ■ Observation

What do you observe when you compare what Jesus says about Himself in verses 23 to 26 with what the Jews say about Him in verse 37?

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### Deeper Reflection

On the third day, Jesus rose from the dead (Jn 20:1-9), because He is “the resurrection and the life” (Jn 11:25). Jesus does not say that He brings about resurrection and gives life, but “I AM” both resurrection and life, which are so intimately linked to His very person, whom we live in and walk with in vital contact. We will all die once. But in life we do experience different forms of “death”. “Death” is a condition which we cannot control or change. “Death” is the end of something that is precious or important to us. We may ask God to “resurrect” that thing. He may or may not. Sometimes God lets certain things in our lives “die” in order to resurrect them, or He may will for them to “die” permanently. We may ask “Why didn’t God keep it from dying?” (v. 37). Resurrection can be immediate – like Jesus resurrecting Lazarus (Jn 11:43), or ultimate – “the resurrection on the last day” (v. 24), “a better resurrection” (Heb 11:35). Whatever may “die” in our lives, Jesus is the Life, who gives us the life that is superior to death and continues through death for eternity. Live now the eternal life in Christ.

## ■ Application

What does Jesus being “the resurrection and the life” mean to me personally?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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April 5  
Sunday  
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

*What was my high point and my low point for the week?*

*What gave me life and what drained me?*

*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

**REFLECT**

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?*

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**RESPOND**

*What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?*

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**  
**April 2015 – Week 1**

**THE BRIDGE**

Jesus bridges the gap between man and God.

**Scripture - Matthew 28:6**

**1. Activity Bite**

Search for “bridge” on the Internet and have fun reading about the huge bridges made by man.

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** What is the purpose of a bridge?

**Q2:** Why does Jesus need to bridge man to God?

**Q3:** Why do some men refuse to cross this “bridge” to God?

**3. Learning Point**

The Easter story begins with Jesus coming to show man the way to return to God, because man has been separated from God due to sin. Jesus gave His life so that we can experience His perfect love. Some people will still reject His love but that does not stop God from loving them. We will continue to love them in the hope that one day they will receive God’s love.

**4. Action Point**

During this Easter period, pray for your family members or friends who have yet to receive Jesus into their lives. Ask God for opportunities to invite them to church.

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear Jesus, thank You for Your great love. You are like a bridge for us to go back to God. I pray that many more people will choose to receive Your love too. Amen.

April 6  
Monday  
2015

# Faith Journey to Life Destiny: Where Abraham Lives In

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 12:5-6

### ■ Observation

Why does the narrator mention “the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem” (v. 6, NIV) – a sacred site, in Abraham’s journey through Canaan?

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### Deeper Reflection

We have seen what Abraham leaves behind, what he lives by and lives for in his faith journey to his life destiny.<sup>4</sup> And now we see where Abraham lives: Canaan (v. 5). The first thing that Abraham encountered in Canaan was its idolatries: “the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem” (v. 6, NIV). The word “site” in Hebrew means “sacred site”,<sup>5</sup> indicating “the presence of a Canaanite shrine”.<sup>6</sup> The “great tree” is “probably an oak tree whose greater height made it a preferred place of worship. Pagans worshipped fertility deities under such trees. With its lofty top in the heavens, it could be considered an axis between heaven and earth and a place for revelation”.<sup>7</sup> “Moreh” means “teacher”, and “it probably is a pagan site for oracles”.<sup>8</sup> Shechem “is regarded as lying in the heart of Canaan”,<sup>9</sup> and “the mention of Shechem suggests it is an ancient sanctuary”.<sup>10</sup> God chose to give Abraham a perverted land as His promised land, for the purpose of blessing the nations (Ge 12:1, 3). We are called to live redemptively in a far more idolatrous world. But, are we influencing the world, or is the world influencing us?

## ■ Application

How can I influence the world, instead of being influenced by the world?

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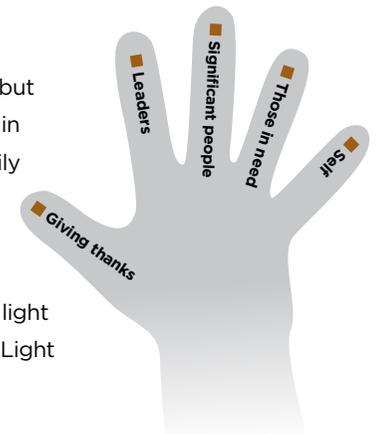
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## ■ Prayer

Gracious Father, I am in the world, but keep me from letting the world be in me. Help me to renew my mind daily through the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, that You may transform my life<sup>11</sup> so that I may grow to become more and more a light of the world in Christ<sup>12</sup> as He is the Light of the world.<sup>13</sup> Amen.



<sup>4</sup> See entries in Devotional Journal 2015: March on 26, 27 and 28 March

<sup>5</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, Genesis: A Commentary (Zondervan, 2001), 207

<sup>6</sup> Derek Kidner, Genesis, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (IVP, 1976), 115

<sup>7</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 207

<sup>8</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 207

<sup>9</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 207

<sup>10</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 207

<sup>11</sup> Romans 12:2

<sup>12</sup> Matthew 5:14

<sup>13</sup> John 8:12

April 7  
Tuesday  
2015

# Faith Journey to Life Destiny: How Abraham Lived It Out (1)

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 12:6-9

### ■ Observation

What is the significance of God appearing to Abraham, and Abraham building altars to God in verses 6 to 8?

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### Deeper Reflection

How did Abraham live his life in the idolatrous and immoral world of Canaan? Through the Word of God: Abraham began his faith journey with God first speaking to him (Ge 12:1), and he “went forth as the LORD had spoken to him” (Ge 12:4). When he arrived at Canaan and was surrounded by its idolatries, God “appeared to” him and spoke to him that he would answer God’s call in “this land” (v. 7a). The Word of God is our life compass, “a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path” (Ps 119:105), as it was for Abraham. Building Altars to God: “he built an altar to the LORD” – on two occasions at two locations: “the great tree of Moreh at Shechem” (vv. 6-7), and somewhere between Bethel and Ai (v. 8). Building altars to God in an idolatrous and immoral world is significant. It is not about showing our religion to the world, but living a life dedicated and consecrated to God in the world. That is what building altars to God is all about: presenting “your bodies (the whole person) a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, your spiritual service of worship”, living “transformed” lives, “not conformed to this world” (Ro 12:1-2).

## ■ Application

What does it mean to me to build altars to God in the idolatrous and immoral world I am living in?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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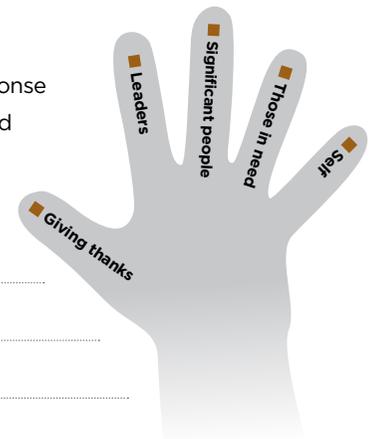
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April 8  
Wednesday  
2015

# Faith Journey to Life Destiny: How Abraham Lived It Out (2)

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 12:7-9; Hebrews 11:9-10, 13-16

### ■ Observation

What is the significance of Abraham pitching a tent and calling upon the name of God in Genesis 12:6-8?

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### Deeper Reflection

How did Abraham live his life in an idolatrous and immoral world of Canaan? Pitching a Tent of God: Abraham “pitched his tent” (Ge 12:8). When Abraham pitched a tent, it has a theological and spiritual significance. It was an act of faith in God, living “as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents... looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb 11:9-10), desiring “a better country... a heavenly one” (Heb 11:13, 16). It is setting our minds on the things above where Christ is (Col 3:1-2), things unseen and eternal (2 Co 4:17-18), because “our citizenship is in heaven” (Php 3:20-21). Calling on the Name of God: Abraham “called upon the name of the LORD” (Ge 12:8). Calling upon God’s name is “to enter into an intensive relationship”<sup>14</sup> with God, expressed in petition and praise, seeking to glorify Him. “What really counted for Abram was the name of the Lord. Publicly and joyfully extolling His worth and stating his dependence upon His strong name were natural expressions of faith.”<sup>15</sup> God’s name refers to God’s very person and character. Before we can call upon God’s name worthily, we must truly know Him, as He has revealed Himself in the Scripture.

## ■ Application

What does it mean to “live in tents” in my life?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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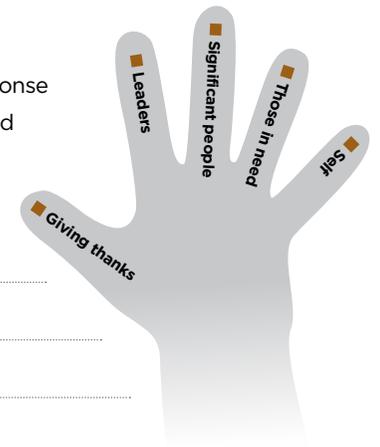
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<sup>14</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 101  
<sup>15</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe, Genesis, The Preacher’s Commentary (Nelson, 1987), 119

April 9  
Thursday  
2015

## Discipleship 101: There Will Be “Famine”

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 12:10

### ■ Observation

What is the narrator telling us by mentioning a severe famine in the Promised Land during Abraham’s sojourning in Canaan (v. 10)?

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### Deeper Reflection

Abraham was sojourning in the Promised Land. That is, he was living at the centre of God’s will. And right at the centre of God’s will there can be “famine” – a “severe” one (Ge 12:10), that put Abraham “under great duress”.<sup>16</sup> This was the first test of Abraham’s faith, and the first discipleship lesson he – and us – must learn: tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and sword are part of biblical discipleship (Ro 8:35). Why? “God’s promises to His pilgrim-covenant partner [Abraham] are not intended to bring quiet and repose. Suffering is a necessary part of the pilgrim’s perfection. Were God’s blessings given without suffering, the saint would confound morality with pleasure. Saints would serve God for what they could get out of it, a system of ethics known as eudaemonism. By interrupting acts of faith from their rewards with hardships, God saves His people from selfishness and develops such virtues as faith, hope, patience and upright character”<sup>17</sup> (cf. Ro 5:1-5). Satan’s challenge to God concerning Job whom God has blessed bountifully is: “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (Job 1:9). Satan’s question reflects what is at the heart of biblical discipleship: Do I follow Jesus for nothing?

### ■ Application

How can I grow in following Jesus for nothing?

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### ■ Prayer

Whom have I in heaven, but You, O Lord, from whom and through whom and to whom are all things?<sup>18</sup> And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.<sup>19</sup> You are my Lord, I have no good besides You.<sup>20</sup> You alone are the portion of my inheritance and my cup of blessing.<sup>21</sup> I have set You continually before me; and I will not be shaken, for You are right beside me.<sup>22</sup> Amen.



<sup>16</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 213

<sup>17</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 216

<sup>18</sup> Romans 11:36

<sup>19</sup> Psalm 73:25

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 16:2

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 16:5

<sup>22</sup> Psalm 16:8

April 10  
Friday  
2015

# Human Pragmatism Overtaking Divine Promises

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 12:10-15

### ■ Observation

What is profoundly absent in in Genesis 12:10-16 in light of Genesis 12:1-4, 7?

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### Deeper Reflection

“Stay in Canaan or go to Egypt?” must be the question going through Abraham’s mind, as he faces famine in Canaan on one hand, and sees food in Egypt on the other. There is a profound divine absence and silence throughout Genesis 12:10-16, in great contrast to Genesis 12:1-4, 7. There is no mention of Abraham inquiring God, in stark contrast to him building altars to God and calling upon His name in Genesis 12:7-8. Abraham’s rapid movement of journeying in Genesis 12:9 and leaving in Genesis 12:10 “gives the impression that he walked right through and out of the Promised Land”<sup>23</sup> – the will of God. Even if God was silent when Abraham inquired Him, he could have fallen back on God’s promises in Genesis 12:1-3, 7. God would provide for him and preserve his life, because God has promised to make him a great nation. He will surely not die. How God would have provided for him, Abraham has deprived us of the chance to know. The “lack of God’s direct interaction with Abraham signifies His disapproval”<sup>24</sup> of his move to Egypt. Human pragmatism overtakes divine promises, which leads to fear and folly based on the philosophy, “Better defiled than dead”<sup>25</sup> (vv. 11-15).

## ■ Application

What challenges do I face in seeking to live my life by divine promises (God’s Word) and not mainly by human pragmatism?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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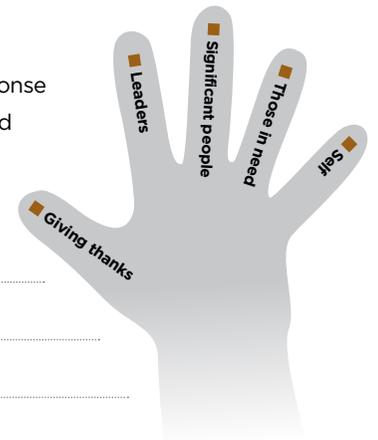
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<sup>23</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 212  
<sup>24</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 212  
<sup>25</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 213

April 11  
Saturday  
2015

# Stumbling Block to Blessing Others

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 12:15-20

### ■ Observation

What are the implications of what happened in verses 15 to 19 in light of God's purpose of blessing the nations through Abraham (Ge 12:3)?

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### Deeper Reflection

Abraham deceived Pharaoh concerning Sarah, which led Pharaoh to take Sarah into his harem (Ge 12:13-15); that resulted in God "inflicting serious diseases" on Egypt (v. 17, NIV). "Though the nature of the diseases is unexplained, it probably pertains to sex so as to suggest to Pharaoh that Sarah is their cause."<sup>26</sup> "What is this you have done to me?" (v. 18), Pharaoh protested to Abraham. It was Abraham's fault that all these happened. God's purpose of calling Abraham is "in you all the families/nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Ge 12:3; 18:18). Egypt is certainly one of the "nations". But instead of bringing blessing and life, Abraham brought curse and death upon Egypt and was told to leave (v. 19b). Likewise, how we live may become stumbling blocks to others to God's blessings. But God was merciful to the elect couple and faithful to His promises, and delivered them out of their self-made troubles. We can assume that the just God healed Egypt of the diseases. God's acts of afflicting, saving, healing and restoring are redemptive, just as His call for Abraham was for redemption. Our Redeemer still uses weak vessels like us to bless others.

## ■ Application

How have I been a stumbling block that prevents others from receiving God's blessings, and what should I do about that?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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<sup>26</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 215

April 12  
Sunday  
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

*What was my high point and my low point for the week?*

*What gave me life and what drained me?*

*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

**REFLECT**

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?*

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**RESPOND**

*What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?*

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**  
**April 2015 - Week 2**

**UNBREAKABLE PROMISES**

Nothing can stop God from fulfilling His promises to us.

**Scripture - Genesis 12:6-7, 10; 13:14-15**

**1. Activity Bite**

List down all the things you like to do, things that you wish you could do all the time. For example, celebrating birthdays or playing soccer with your friends.

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** How would you feel if you are prevented from enjoying these things?

**Q2:** Wouldn't it be good if there was someone who is able to make sure all these things continue and can't be stopped? What would you give to have that person as your friend?

**Q3:** Read Genesis 12:6-7, 10; 13:14-15. What could have prevented God from fulfilling His promise to Abraham?

**3. Learning Point**

God promised Abraham that He would give him lots of land and children. These were great blessings to the people of his time. However, there were events that could prevent those promises from being fulfilled. But God, being ever powerful, will not allow anything to stop what He wants to do. Just as nothing can stop the sun from rising every day from the east, He is a God whom we can trust for all His promises to come to pass.

**4. Action Point**

Share three things that you know God has promised you. For example, He has promised to meet all your needs. Give thanks to Him for each of the items you have mentioned.

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, thank You for being faithful in keeping all Your promises. I can trust that You will take care of me all the time. I will believe in You always. Amen.

April 13  
Monday  
2015

## Return to a New Beginning

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 12:8-10; 13:1-4

### ■ Observation

What is the significance of the two contrasting geographical movements of Abraham in verses 8 to 10 and verses 1 to 4?

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### Deeper Reflection

Genesis 12:10-20 does not tell us immediately or directly if God approved or disapproved of Abraham's descent to Egypt because of the severe famine in Canaan. The only mention of God is "the LORD struck Pharaoh" (v. 17). But two geographical movements in the story tell us something: "Abram went down to Egypt" (v. 10) from "the Negev" (v. 9), and "Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev" (v. 1). It was a return to where he was "at the beginning" (v. 3), and to where he built an altar to God "formerly" (v. 4). It was a spiritual return to the altar of God: to reconsecrate his life to God and realign to God's will. Even as servants of God seeking to walk in obedience to God, we can still go astray like a lost sheep (Ps 119:176). Discipleship in reality is three steps forward, two steps back. God is still with us when we go astray from Him, just as He was graciously so with Abraham, as indicated by His merciful intervention (Ge 12:17). When Abraham returned to "the beginning" (v. 3), it was a new beginning. He could restart his life in God. The new beginning begins at the altar of God, and by calling on His name again (v. 4).

### ■ Application

In what area(s) of my life do I need a new beginning in God, and how should I move on from there?

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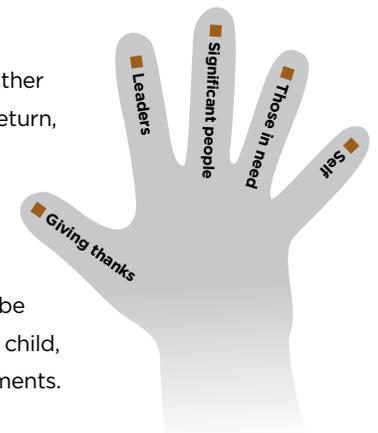
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### ■ Prayer

My heavenly Father, You are the Father who waits for His prodigal son to return, who is ever longing and ready to receive His beloved son when he returns, to give him a new beginning to restart his life afresh. When I go astray like a lost sheep, be gracious and merciful to seek Your child, for I do not forget Your commandments. Amen.



April 14  
Tuesday  
2015

# Focus on My Character

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 13:5-9

### ■ Observation

What does the “strife” between Abraham and Lot in the Promised Land that led to their separation (vv. 5-9) tell you about God and Abraham?

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### Deeper Reflection

Abraham was prosperous and so too was Lot, because he “went with Abram” (v. 5), and “their possessions were so great” (v. 6). God was the source of the blessings, for God had called Abraham to bless him that he might be a blessing to others (Ge 12:2). But so great was God’s blessings that “there was not enough pasture land” for them both “to stay together” (v. 6, GNB<sup>27</sup>). Here was a “problem” about God: “the land of promise did not appear to be living up to its promise... God had prospered Abram and had promised him the land, but the problem he now had to deal with was that what God appeared to be doing did not fit what God appeared to be providing”.<sup>28</sup> God was silent throughout Genesis 13:5-13. And this “problem” about God led to a problem from man: “strife” (v. 7), which led to a separation (vv. 8-11). It is futile to try to harmonise the vertical-horizontal theological tension here. The tension, both vertically and horizontally, is a testing and training of character. As demonstrated by Abraham (vv. 8, 9), face the conflicts outside you with the character inside you. In friction, focus on your character.

## ■ Application

How do I see relational conflicts in light of the testing and training of my character?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>27</sup> GNB: Good News Bible  
<sup>28</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe, 123

April 15  
Wednesday  
2015

# Be Redemptive in Relational Conflicts

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 13:5-9

### ■ Observation

What does the way Abraham parted ways with Lot reveal about him (vv. 5-9)?

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### Deeper Reflection

“Wherever people live in close proximity to each other there will inevitably be friction.”<sup>29</sup> Abraham had been a benefactor and blessing to Lot, yet “strife” happened between them (v. 7). In a relational conflict, peace must have the priority: “Let there be no strife between you and me” (v. 8). The impetus for making peace the priority is God. God is “the God of peace” (2 Co 13:11) who saved us to “have peace with God” (Ro 5:1), and Christ is “our peace” in reconciling sinful humans with each other through His death (Eph 2:13-14). But sometimes God’s people must part ways (v. 9a) “for the sake of peace”<sup>30</sup>, like Paul and Barnabas (Ac 15:39). Abraham must have considered all possible solutions to the “strife” between himself and Lot. However, in parting of ways, we must still preserve the relationship – “for we are brothers” (v. 8). Abraham practised “give preference to one another in honour” (Ro 12:10): the “social superior humbles himself before the inferior to preserve peace”<sup>31</sup> by letting him choose first the land he wanted to go to (v. 9b). Abraham’s faith in God gave him the security and liberty to be so magnanimous.

## ■ Application

How can I make peace as the priority in my relational conflicts?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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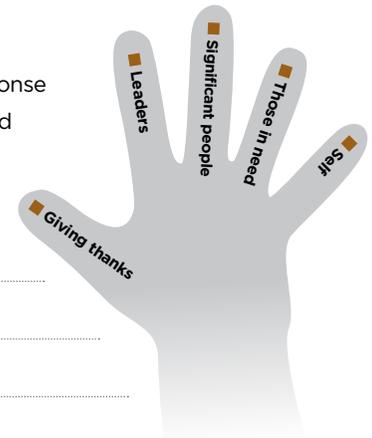
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<sup>29</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe, 123  
<sup>30</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 221  
<sup>31</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 221



April 17  
Friday  
2015

# Seeing as the Lord Sees

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 13:14-17

### ■ Observation

What contrasts do you observe between Lot (Ge 13:10-13) and Abraham (vv. 14-17)?

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### Deeper Reflection

After Lot's separation from Abraham, God spoke to Abraham, "Now lift up your eyes and look" (v. 14) – similar to "Lot lifted up his eyes and see" (Ge 13:10). But, the contrast is significant. One is "God speaking to Abraham", the other is Lot acting on his own. One is "the land... I will give it to you" (vv. 15, 17), the other is "Lot chose for himself" (v. 11). It is a contrast between divine and human perspective and choice. One is the best choice in divine terms while the other is the best choice in human terms. The principle is clear: See as God sees, not as man sees. Listen to God's Word, look with God's Word, live by God's Word and be led by God's Word. The "land" that God gives you – whatever God has in store for you – may look inferior and unattractive on the external when compared to the glamour and grandeur of the world. But you can say, "The land You have given me is a pleasant land. What a wonderful inheritance!" (Ps 16:6, NLT). The "land" that God gives you includes sufferings, but you can say, "Momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2 Co 4:17).

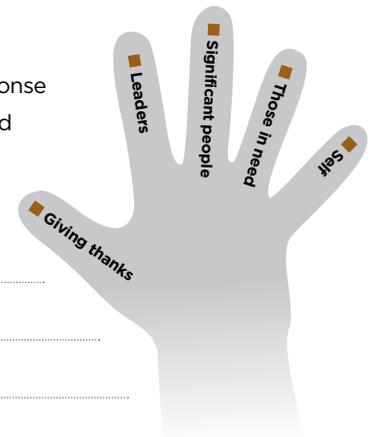
## ■ Application

How can I cultivate myself to see things as God sees?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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April 18  
Saturday  
2015

# Building Depth through the Basics

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 13:14-18

### ■ Observation

How is Abraham's spiritual life portrayed in verses 14 to 18?

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### Deeper Reflection

In Genesis 13:1-4, Abraham recovered from his spiritual setback (Ge 12:10-20) by going back to the altar to God (13:4). But, it led to "strife" between him and Lot (13:5-7). However, Abraham met with success in contrast to his previous setback when dealing with the "strife": His faith in God gave him the security and liberty to be magnanimous towards Lot (13:8-12). Here we see Abraham growing (cf. Ro 4:20 – "grew strong in faith"). Building spiritual depth is nothing sophisticated; it is simply built through the basics. *Trusting the Word of God:* Abraham failed to act by God's Word in his descent to Egypt during the severe famine in Canaan, but his separation from Lot was borne out of trusting God's Word. And after the separation, God spoke to him (vv. 14-17). *Walking with God:* "walk about the land" (v. 17). It was walking with God in His presence in the ordinariness of life; but a faith building walk, learning to see as God sees (vv. 14-15). *Waiting on God:* God was just repeating Genesis 12:1-3 and 12:7 in 13:14-17. It remains a promise to be fulfilled. *Worship to God:* "he built an altar to the LORD" (v. 18) – Abraham's third altar (cf. 12:7-8; 13:4). And sandwiching the strife and separation incident (13:5-17) are Abraham's altars to God (13:4, 18).

## ■ Application

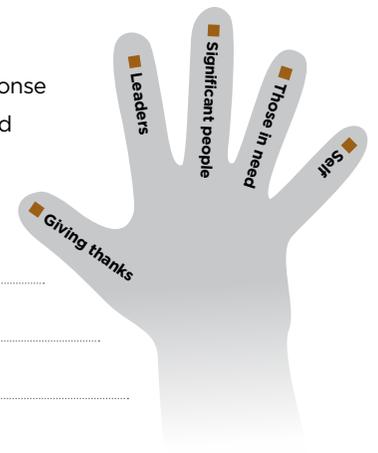
How can I grow deeper spiritually through the basics of the Christian life?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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April 19  
Sunday  
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

*What was my high point and my low point for the week?*

*What gave me life and what drained me?*

*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

**REFLECT**

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?*

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**RESPOND**

*What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?*

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**  
**April 2015 - Week 3**

**THE BETTER HALF**

We can give to others what is better because God will always bless us with what is best.

*Scripture - Deuteronomy 15:10*

**1. Activity Bite**

Play a game of tic-tac-toe but the twist here is that each player needs to let the other person win. You may want to reward the winner of each round with some candy.

**2. Chat Time**

**Q1:** Can you describe the feeling of letting others win, and watching them receive a reward?

**Q2:** Why is it sometimes so difficult to let others have what is better?

**Q3:** Read Deuteronomy 15:8. Can we trust God that He will continue to give us good things even when we give ours away to others?

**3. Learning Point**

When God blesses us with good things, He allows us to enjoy them. Not only that, He also wants us to bless others so that they can enjoy the good things too. Sometimes we get too selfish and keep all the good things for ourselves. That is not the way of Jesus. He gave us His best. He wants us not to be afraid of giving our best to others too because He can still bless us with better things. Giving others our best is an act of Christ's true love.

**4. Action Point**

Think of one good thing that you may have held back from giving to your parents or siblings. It may be not just your belongings. It can be your time or a helping hand. Consider giving that away this week.

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, please help me not to be afraid of giving good things to others. I want to trust You as a giver of good things. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

April 20  
Monday  
2015

## Do You See God?

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 14:1-11

### ■ Observation

In what ways can the pattern of events in verses 1 to 11 be seen in today's world?

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### Deeper Reflection

The stage of the events in Genesis 14 is wars, with “kings” (vv. 1-11), Abraham (vv. 12-17, 21-24) and “God Most High” (vv. 18-20) as key players. For the first time in the Bible, tribes and nations now war against each other – an increase and intensification of violence on earth (progression from Ge 6:11, 13 and 9:5-6). The word “king” is repeated 28 times in Genesis 14. Kings are the most powerful people, who want to control others, just as King Chedorlaomer made kings of other nations “serve” him (v. 4), requiring them “to pay him tribute, to give him whatever he demanded”.<sup>33</sup> The ancient historical scene of Genesis 14:1-11 can be easily seen in today's world as well. Much of human history, at national and global levels, is shaped by political, military and economic powers, together with their ideological and cultural influence and dominance. This can bring about instability, uncertainty and insecurity to the people subject to them. It is of theological significance that God is not mentioned at this point in Genesis 14. All that is seen here are just human acts. God is there, but we don't see Him until verses 18 to 20. Do you see God in the Genesis 14:1-11 world of today, where He seems to be silent and inactive?

### ■ Application

What does it mean to me to see God in the Genesis 14:1-11 world of today, where He seems to be silent and inactive?

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### ■ Prayer

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord Almighty; the earth is full of His glory!<sup>34</sup> God, You nullify the plans of the nations, and thwart the purposes of the peoples. But Your plans stand firm forever, the purposes of Your heart through all generations.<sup>35</sup> You have planned and who can frustrate it? And as for Your stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the earth is full of Your glory!



<sup>33</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 229

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 6:3

<sup>35</sup> Psalm 33:10-11

<sup>36</sup> Isaiah 14:27

April 21  
Tuesday  
2015

# Subversive Theology of True Power

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 14:1-17

### ■ Observation

What is the significance of the word “defeat” that is repeated four times in verses 1 to 17 (note vv. 5, 7, 15, 17)?

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### Deeper Reflection

The key word “defeat” occurs four times in Genesis 14. As the confederacy of four Mesopotamian kings went to war against the coalition of five Canaanite kings (vv. 1-4), they “defeated” six tribes along the way (vv. 5-7), before subduing the Canaanite kings (vv. 8-11). It is in this big war theatre that Abraham came into the picture, when he heard that his nephew, Lot, was captured (v. 12). Abraham led “his retainers born in his own household” (v. 14, NJB<sup>37</sup>), his “most reliable slaves”<sup>38</sup>, 318 in number, to rescue Lot. And Abraham “defeated” “Chedorlaomer and the kings with him” (vv. 15, 17) – an alliance “that has ravaged six tribes and defeated five kings”<sup>39</sup> – and with a smaller and weaker army at that. Abraham, “God’s faithful warrior, though lacking the title ‘king’, is in fact a greater king”.<sup>40</sup> The inferior was mightier than the superior. God’s people can conquer the “kings” of the world – though not exactly like Abraham. We “overcome” “the beast” that “wages war against the Lamb” and His faithful followers, by following the Lamb as lambs like Him (Rev 14:4; 17:13-14). Herein lies the subversive theology of true power!

## ■ Application

How does the subversive theology of true power shape the way I live in today’s challenging world?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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<sup>37</sup> The New Jerusalem Bible

<sup>38</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 232

<sup>39</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 236

<sup>40</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 226

April 22  
Wednesday  
2015

# Enlarged Vision of God

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 14:18-24

### ■ Observation

What does “God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth” mean to Abraham (vv. 18-24)?

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### Deeper Reflection

God is not mentioned in both the wars of the kings in Genesis 14:1-11, and Abraham’s “defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings with him” in verses 12 to 17, until verses 18 to 20, that behind all these happenings was “God Most High”. “God Most High” points to God’s supreme and sovereign lordship over creation and the nations. God is “possessor [or, creator<sup>41</sup>] of heaven and earth” (vv. 19, 22) which refers to Him as the source and sustainer of all things, who is “intimately involved in this present reality”<sup>42</sup> as our “help” (Ps 121:1-2; 124:8). Abraham depended on God when he sought to rescue Lot, as implied by later revelation that his victory was “God Most High who has delivered your enemies into your hand” (v. 20). In his conversation with the king of Sodom, Abraham mentioned “the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth” (v. 22). God revealed Himself as such a God to Abraham through Melchizedek – a new revelation (vv. 18-20). Abraham’s vision of God was enlarged, knowing his God deeper. Seek to know God when you read His Word, and keep asking this question, “What does this text tell me about God?”

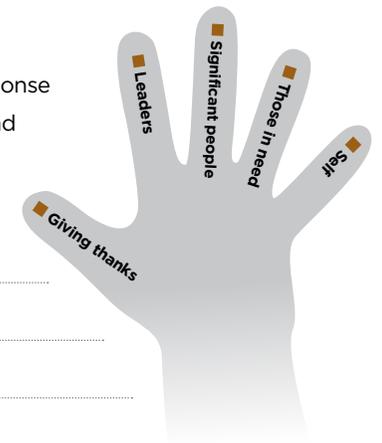
## ■ Application

How do I want to see my vision of God enlarged in my life?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>41</sup> ESV margin; Bruce K. Waltke, 234  
<sup>42</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 235

April 23  
Thursday  
2015

## Growing Deeper in Character

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 13:5-9 and 14:12-16

### ■ Observation

What do you observe about Abraham in verses 5 to 9 and verses 12 to 16?

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### Deeper Reflection

God's purpose for calling Abraham was world missions: "in you all the families/nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Ge 12:3; 18:18). But God gives His greatest attention to the person for His purpose and the character of the one He has called. When Abraham and Sarah were in Egypt because of the severe famine in Canaan (12:10), he would rather have his wife defiled than him dying (12:11-15). Abraham's only concern was "they will kill me", "that it may go well with me", "that I may live" (12:12-13). When the strife between Abraham and Lot called for a necessary separation (13:5-7), the senior humbly gave the junior preference in choosing the land to go to (13:8-9). Abraham had grown from a self-centered person to a self-giving one. And when he heard of Lot's plight, he immediately went to his rescue. Abraham "escalates his commitment to his kinsman Lot from humility and generosity in order to preserve peace, to risking his life and fortune to rescue him".<sup>43</sup> We also see that "the decisive courageous warrior at Mamre has done a complete about face from the duplicitous and cowardly husband".<sup>44</sup> Difficult circumstances, people and relationships are common divine means for building our characters and transforming our lives.

### ■ Application

How have I become less self-centred and more self-giving?

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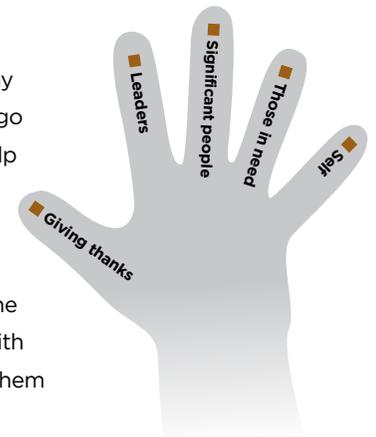
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### ■ Prayer

Lord Jesus, You must increase in my life, and I must decrease.<sup>45</sup> When I go through difficult circumstances, help me to fix my eyes on You, who endured the cross, that I may not grow weary or lose heart.<sup>46</sup> When I relate with difficult people, help me grow in humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to them in love.<sup>47</sup> Amen.



<sup>43</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 236

<sup>44</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 226

<sup>45</sup> John 3:30

<sup>46</sup> Hebrews 12:2-3

<sup>47</sup> Ephesians 4:2

April 24  
Friday  
2015

# God's Blessings or Worldly Benefits? (1)

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 14:18-24

### ■ Observation

What does Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek tell us about his relationship with God in verses 18-22?

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### Deeper Reflection

After Abraham returned from his victory, "the king of Sodom" (Ge 14:17) and "Melchizedek king of Salem" (v. 18) came out "at the same time"<sup>48</sup> to meet him. One offered God's blessings (vv. 18-20), the other worldly benefits (vv. 21-24). What marked Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek? *Banquet of God:* Melchizedek "brought out bread and wine" to Abraham (v. 18) – "a full dinner, a royal banquet".<sup>49</sup> Melchizedek, "the king of righteousness" and "the king of peace" (Heb 7:1-2) like Jesus Christ, the ultimate Kingly-Priest (Heb 6:19-20). In Christ, we are the righteousness of God and have peace with God, able to stand in God's presence of grace (Ro 5:1-2; 2 Co 5:21), where we dine with Him in communion (cf. Rev 3:20). *Blessing of God:* "Blessed be Abram... and blessed be God Most High" (vv. 19-20). God and Abraham were sharing blessing together in intimate fellowship. *Belonging to God:* Melchizedek addressed Abraham as "Abram of God Most High" (v. 19). You, too, can replace "Abram" with your name; and that becomes your identity. *Beholding of God:* Abraham came to see and know his God as "God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth" (vv. 19, 22) – an enlarged theological vision.

## ■ Application

How does Abraham's encounter and relationship with God challenge me in my life?

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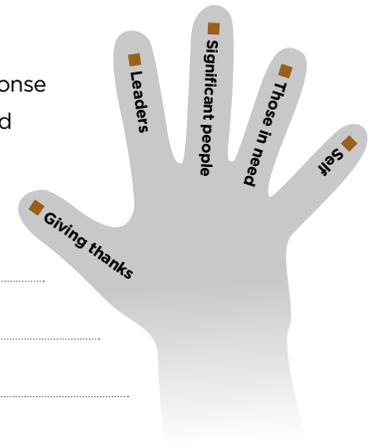
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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>48</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 233  
<sup>49</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 233

April 25  
Saturday  
2015

# God's Blessings or Worldly Benefits? (2)

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 14:18-24

### ■ Observation

What is the significance of Abraham's encounter with the king of Sodom (vv. 21-24) immediately after his encounter with Melchizedek (vv. 18-20)?

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### Deeper Reflection

After his victory, Abraham “holds in his hand the plundered wealth of the six nations who live in Transjordan and the south as far as Paran and of the pentapolis around the Dead Sea. This wealth even includes Lot’s”<sup>50</sup> (Ge 14:16). The first thing Abraham did was to give “God the firstfruits of the plunder”<sup>51</sup> to acknowledge with gratitude that “the Lord is the victor”<sup>52</sup> (v. 20). Abraham could have kept the rest of the plunder which was “rightfully his as victor”<sup>53</sup>, but he refused to. The “ambiguity of providence”<sup>54</sup> caused him to believe that the plunder was not God’s blessing for him. That’s why when the king of Sodom offered him to keep the plunder, he declined – not even “a thread or a sandal thong” – but let him have them all instead (vv. 21-24). And Abraham did not want the pretentious king of Sodom to “irrationally think that he, not the Lord, has made him rich”<sup>55</sup> (v. 23). God’s blessings and the worldly benefits “are easily confused”.<sup>56</sup> The latter can be construed as the former. We need spiritual discernment to differentiate the two; which can come only when we keep walking with God as portrayed in verses 18 to 20.

## ■ Application

How can I grow to be discerning so as to be able to differentiate between God's blessings and worldly benefits?

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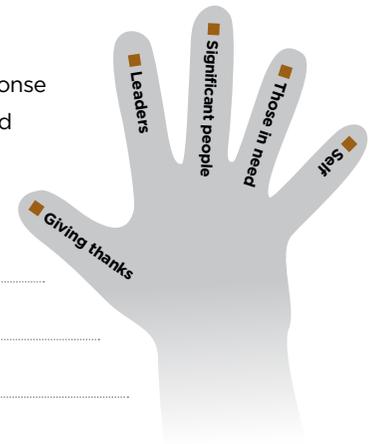
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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response arising from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.



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<sup>50</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 226  
<sup>51</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 227  
<sup>52</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 227  
<sup>53</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 227  
<sup>54</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 227  
<sup>55</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, 227  
<sup>56</sup> Allen P. Ross, Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis (Baker, 1998, 1996), 300

April 26  
Sunday  
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation

■ Application

■ Prayer

The Past Week

REVIEW

*What was my high point and my low point for the week?*

*What gave me life and what drained me?*

*How was the Spirit of God at work?*

**REFLECT**

*What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?*

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**RESPOND**

*What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying?*

COMMIT IN PRAYER

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**FAMILY DEVOTIONAL**  
**April 2015 - Week 4**

**HELPING THOSE IN NEED**

God has given us the ability to help those who are in need.

**Scripture - Matthew 25:35-40**

**1. Activity Bite**

Take a trip on the MRT with your parents. Before boarding, say a prayer to ask God to show you the people who may need a seat in a crowded train or give you an opportunity to give up your seat for them, if you are seated.

**2. Chat Time**

- Q1:** Who are the people who may need a seat more than you?
- Q2:** Put yourself in their shoes. Can you imagine why you would need a seat if you were them?
- Q3:** In Matthew 25:35-40, why did Jesus say that if you bless the poor, you are blessing Him too?

**3. Learning Point**

Jesus cares for the poor as much as He cares for the rich. He didn't mind being a poor carpenter so that He could mingle with all the common people on the streets where He could help or feed them. Those who are in need, whether rich or poor, do not have the ability to help themselves (in that particular need). Jesus, who loves all men, wants to be there to help. Many times He will use us who are able, to help those who are unable to help themselves. We must not be selfish but be willing to help with the love that God gives us.

**4. Action Point**

Is there anyone whom you think may need help? Pray to God and ask how He wants you to help. Then get your parents to decide how you can offer your help.

**5. Prayer Power**

(Ask your children to pray after you.)  
Thank You Jesus for helping us when we are in need. I recognise also that You have enabled me to help others. Help me to help others with Your love. Amen.

April 27  
Monday  
2015

## Journeying through Disorientation: Questions Concerning God

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 15:1-3, 7-8

### ■ Observation

What do the two questions Abraham asked God in verses 1 to 3 and 7 to 8 tell us about God and Abraham?

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### Deeper Reflection

God promised Abraham: “To your descendants I will give this land” (Ge 12:7). Abraham waited. Nothing happened. Sometime later, God renewed the same promise to him (13:14-15). He waited. Again, nothing happened. And now he reached a point of disorientation, where he asked God two questions concerning His promise: “What will You give me since I am childless?” (15:2) and “How will I know that I shall possess the land?” (15:8). Abraham was taking a realistic and practical look at his own body and Sarah’s womb that could never reproduce when he planned to make Eliezer his heir (vv. 2-3). Going through times of disorientation is part of the discipleship journey when we have questions concerning God like “Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?” (Ps 10:1), “How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?” (Ps 13:1). It is through times of disorientation, our vision of God is enlarged, our knowledge of Him deepened and our relationship with Him strengthened. There is, however, a legitimate place for being realistic and practical, unless God leads us to walk by faith above the realistic and practical. Otherwise, it will be presumptuousness. Walking by faith must always be based on the Word of God.

### ■ Application

How do I handle the questions concerning God when my life is in a state of disorientation?

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### ■ Prayer

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning. O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; and by night, but I have no rest. Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel. In You our fathers trusted; they trusted and You delivered them. To You they cried out and were delivered; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.<sup>57</sup> Amen.



<sup>57</sup> Psalm 22:1-5

April 28  
Tuesday  
2015

# Journeying through Disorientation: God's Unfathomable Ways

## ■ Scripture

Genesis 15:2-5, 13-16

### ■ Observation

What do God's answers to Abraham's two questions concerning His promise of descendants and land to Abraham tell us about God (vv. 2-5, 13-16)?

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### Deeper Reflection

God's answer to Abraham's two questions concerning His promise of "descendants" and "land" (Ge 15:2-3, 7-8) reveals a God whose ways can be unfathomable. God was saying to Abraham, "I know that you and Sarah are physically beyond childbearing, but your heir shall come forth from your own body (v. 4), and you will have many, many descendants. However, your descendants will not live on this land which I promised to give you and them. On the contrary, they will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed for 400 years (v. 13)." Our eternal infinite God does act in alogical ways, beyond the bounds of logic. And God did not give Abraham any explanation for the enslavement and oppression. God does not owe us any explanation of Himself. Being perplexed over God's unfathomable ways is part of the journey of knowing God. We may be "perplexed, but not despairing" (2 Co 4:8). We cannot predict what, when and how God works. Faith in God is not being able to predict God. We must be careful not to stereotype God by boxing Him up by our "effective", "God will act", "faith" formulas. God is GOD.

## ■ Application

How should I look at God when I am perplexed over the way things are happening in my life or in the world?

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## ■ Prayer

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

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April 30  
Thursday  
2015

## Journeying through Disorientation: God is Faithful

### ■ Scripture

Genesis 15:7-11, 17-21

### ■ Observation

What is the significance of what God asked Abraham to do in verses 9 to 10 (cf. Jer 34:18-20) and what he saw in verses 17 to 21?

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### Deeper Reflection

When Abraham asked God, “How may I know that I shall possess the land?” (vv. 7-8), God instructed him to bring to Him five different animals, and “cut them into two, and laid each half opposite the other” (vv. 9-10). Here is a covenant ritual resembling that of Jeremiah 34:18-20, where God assured Abraham that He will most certainly fulfil His covenant promise to him. “The intent of the ritual could hardly be more daring. God is obligating Himself to Abraham and his seed to the degree that He places Himself under a potential curse. Should this God of promise prove to be unreliable, then may His fate be dismemberment, as with these animals.”<sup>60</sup> In his “deep sleep” (v. 12), Abraham saw “a smoking oven and a flaming torch” – “a manifestation of God”<sup>61</sup> – “passed between these pieces” (v. 17), symbolising “God alone makes the covenant: the accent is on His initiative and giving”<sup>62</sup> (vv. 18-21). God responded to Abraham’s disorientation with a double assurance of His covenant faithfulness. Even in the darkest moments of the exiles in Babylon, their hope is “Great is Thy faithfulness!” (La 3:21-23).

### ■ Application

What does God’s way of assuring Abraham His covenant faithfulness mean to me personally?

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### ■ Prayer

Lord, You lead me in ways I do not know, through joy and sorrow, through victory and defeat, beyond my understanding. Grant me faith to see Your guiding hand in all things; that being neither lifted up by seeming success, nor cast down by seeming failure, I may press forward wherever You lead me in Your goodness, lovingkindness, righteousness and faithfulness. Amen.



<sup>60</sup> Victor Hamilton, Handbook of the Pentateuch (Baker, 1982), 105

<sup>61</sup> Derek Kidner, 125

<sup>62</sup> Derek Kidner, 125







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