

*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 ESV

Reminder of
GOD'S
SOVEREIGNTY
in all circumstances
for His glory

DECEMBER 2015

*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 ESV

COVENANT EFC

2015 Memory Focus

FROM GENESIS (ESV)

JANUARY

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

Genesis 1:1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Nov/Dec
2015
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Worship Songs

AS THE DEER

Chorus

You alone are my strength my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship Thee

Verse 1

As the deer panteth for the water
So my soul longeth after Thee
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship Thee

Verse 2

You're my friend
And You are my brother
Even though You are a King
I love You more than any other
So much more than anything

Verse 3

I want You more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy
You alone are the real joy giver
And the apple of my eye

Words & Music: Martin Nystrom

Year & Publisher: © 1984 Maranatha Praise, Inc. (Admin. by Maranatha! Music)

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TIMES OF REFRESHING

Times of refreshing
Here in Your presence
No greater blessing
Than being with You

My soul is restored
My mind is renewed
There's no greater joy, Lord
Than being with You

Words & Music: Don Harris | Martin Nystrom

Year & Publisher: © 1993 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.)

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BEFORE THE THRONE OF GOD (HOUR OF PRAYER)

Verse 1

Before the Throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great high priest whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart

Verse 2

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Praise the One,
Risen Son of God!

Verse 3

Before Him there the risen Lamb
My perfect spotless righteousness
The great unchangeable I Am
The King of glory and of grace
One in Himself I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ my Saviour and my God

Words & Music: Charitie Lees Bancroft | William Batchelder Bradbury

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Music: Public Domain

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KNOWING YOU

Verse 1

All I once held dear built my life upon
All this world reveres and wars to own
All I once thought gain I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now compared to this

Chorus

Knowing You Jesus knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all, You're the best
You're my joy my righteousness
And I love You, Lord

Verse 2

Now my heart's desire is to know You more
To be found in You and known as Yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All surpassing gift of righteousness

Verse 3

O to know the power of Your risen life
And to know You in Your sufferings
To become like You in Your death my Lord
So with You to live and never die

Words & Music: Graham Kendrick

Year & Publisher: © 1993 Make Way Music

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FIND US FAITHFUL

Verse 1

We're pilgrims on the journey
Of the narrow road
And those who've gone before us
Line the way
Cheering on the faithful
Encouraging the weary
Their lives a stirring testament
To God's sustaining grace

Verse 2

Surrounded by so great
A cloud of witnesses
Let us run the race
Not only for the prize
But as those who've gone before us
Let us leave to those behind us
The heritage of faithfulness
Passed on through godly lives

Chorus

Oh may all who come behind us
Find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion
Light their way
May the footprints that we leave
Lead them to believe
And the lives we live
Inspire them to obey (to obey)
(Oh may all who come behind us)
(Find us faithful)

Verse 3

After all our hopes and dreams
Have come and gone
And our children sift through all
We've left behind
May the clues that they discover
And the mem'ries they uncover
Become the light that leads them
To the road we each must find

Ending

Find us faithful
Oh may all who come behind us
Find us faithful

*Words & Music: Jon Mohr
Year & Publisher: © 1987 Birdwing Music
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CONSUMING FIRE

Verse 1

There must be more than this
O breath of God come breathe within
There must be more than this
Spirit of God we wait for You
Fill us anew we pray
Fill us anew we pray

Chorus

Consuming fire fan into flame
A passion for Your name
Spirit of God fall in this place
Lord have Your way
Lord have Your way
With us

Bridge

Stir it up in our hearts, Lord
Stir it up in our hearts, Lord
Stir it up in our hearts, Lord
A passion for Your name

*Words & Music: Tim Hughes
Year & Publisher: © 2002 Thankyou Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))
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COMPLETE

Verse 1

Here I am O God
I bring this sacrifice
My open heart
I offer up my life

I look to You, Lord
Your love that never ends
Restores me again

Chorus

So I lift my eyes to You, Lord
In Your strength
Will I break through, Lord
Touch me now
Let Your love fall down on me
I know Your love dispels all my fears

Through the storm I will hold on Lord
And by faith I will walk on Lord
Then I'll see beyond my Calvary one day
And I will be complete in You

Bridge

I look to You, Lord
Your love that never ends
Restores me again

Ending

I will be complete in
I will be complete in you

Words & Music: Andrew Ulugia

Year & Publisher: © 2001 Integrity's Praise! Music (Admin. by Crossroad Distributors Pty. Ltd.);

Parachute Music (Admin. by SHOUT! Music Publishing)

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WONDERFUL GOD

Verse 1

There is no other God like You
Who made the heavens and the earth
And fills my heart with joy unending
All I can do is give my life
Offer to You a sacrifice
Here is my heart for You unending

Bridge

All of my life, belongs to You alone
With every breath, my song will rise to You

Chorus

You are the joy of every nation
The giver of salvation
Wonderful God
You are God throughout the ages
Enthroned upon our praises
Wonderful God

Verse 2

Every morning when I rise
It is Your presence I desire
To see Your faithfulness unending

Mercy and goodness follow me
For in Your presence I am free
I put my trust in You unending

Words and Music: Denis Campos

Year and Publisher: © 2009 CFN Music (Admin. by CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

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FOREVER

Verse 1

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

Verse 2

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

Pre-chorus

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

Verse 3

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 CopyCare Asia Ltd (Singapore Branch))

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BEAUTIFUL SAVIOUR

Verse 1

Jesus beautiful Saviour
God of all majesty risen King
(Lamb of God holy and righteous)
(Blessed Redeemer bright morning star)

Pre-Chorus

All the heavens shout Your praise
All creation bows to worship You

Chorus

How wonderful, how beautiful
Name above ev'ry name exalted high
How wonderful how beautiful
Jesus Your name, name above ev'ry name, Jesus

Bridge

I will sing forever
Jesus I love You
Jesus I love You

Ending

Jesus beautiful Saviour
(Repeat)

Words and Music: Henry Seeley

Year and Publisher: © 2006 Planetshakers Ministries Int. Inc. (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing (IMI))

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The Church Beyond

TOUCHING AND REBUILDING LIVES THROUGH DISASTER RESPONSE AND COMMUNITY

Are we surprised or even alarmed by the wars and many natural disasters that are happening around the world? This year the highest mountain in the world, Mt Everest, and the highest mountain in Southeast Asia, Mt Kinabalu, were both hit by strong, devastating earthquakes. In addition, numerous typhoons, hurricanes, floods and tsunamis have caused havoc around the world in recent times.

As a result of these disasters, many countries and communities, even those that were closed or restricted access, have become more open to receiving outside help. These open doors give us opportunities to demonstrate God's unconditional love in practical ways. We have seen many not only being open to the gospel but also receiving Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

In recent months, many in one community were baptised as they were touched by the help rendered by Christian volunteers in rebuilding their homes and lives. In another community, a 90-member church grew to more than 350 members within a year after a disaster as the community witnessed how the church rallied behind the families by providing food and helping to rebuild homes.

In each of these situations, relationships with the community were built and strengthened as they received help. The disaster relief programmes created new livelihood projects so that families could have a source of income. The aim of these projects is to sustain their livelihoods for the long term.

These are but humble beginnings of a work started by God. As He leads we will follow so as to bring His kingdom into communities that have yet to know Him and His love. For us who are blessed to know God and experience His love, the question we need to ask ourselves is: Are we prepared and ready to help when God opens doors?

PRAY

For more people to be available to be trained and equipped so that God can use us when there is a disaster.

For more volunteers from various backgrounds with diverse skills to support ongoing projects.

For more livelihood projects to be identified and established so that more families can support themselves.

This is especially crucial in countries like the Philippines, Indonesia and Nepal which have been badly affected by natural disasters. Funding is needed to kick-start various projects in the coming months.

“For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.”

MATTHEW 24:5-8 (ESV)

December 1
Tuesday
2015

Living a Cross-centred Life

■ Scripture

Genesis 43:1-10; 44:1-34

■ Observation

What do you observe about Judah in his negotiation with Joseph over Benjamin to be retained as a slave to Joseph in verses 1 to 10 and Genesis 44:1-34 (note Ge 43:8-9 and Ge 44:32-34)?

Deeper Reflection

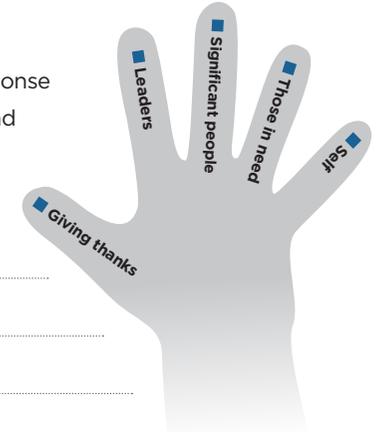
During the severe famine with food running out, and Jacob unwilling to risk Benjamin's life as the condition for more food from Egypt (Ge 42:38; 43:1-7), "Judah spoke" (v. 3). We last hear of Judah in Genesis 38¹. Now he has emerged as a transformed Judah. **Self-giving Surety** (v. 9): "I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him". "I myself" is emphatic in Hebrew. Judah put his own life on the line. And should he default in returning Benjamin, he proclaimed, "Then let me bear the blame before you forever." Judah "is willing to take whatever penalty Jacob wishes to inflict on him for the rest of his life, and... treat his sons harshly (see Ge 49:3-7)"². **Self-giving Sacrifice** (Ge 44:32-34): When Joseph wanted to detain Benjamin as a slave for stealing his cup (Ge 44:1-17), Judah gave "the longest speech in Genesis"³ (vv. 18-34), climaxing with "let your servant remain instead" (v. 33). "Judah so feels for his father that he begs to sacrifice himself for a brother more loved than himself"⁴ (v. 34). This is the "first instance of human sacrifice in Scripture"⁵ that foreshadows the sinless Jesus becoming sin for us "that in Him we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Co 5:21). As a type of Jesus, Judah models a cross-centered life (Gal 2:20).

■ Application

What does it mean for me to live for the sake of Christ and the interests of others?

■ Prayer

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



¹ See *Devotional Journal* 2015, November 2-4
² Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Zondervan, 2001), 554
³ Bruce K. Waltke, 561
⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 562, citing N. Sternberg
⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, 562

December 2
Wednesday
2015

Don't Be Angry with Yourself

■ Scripture

Genesis 45:1-5

■ Observation

What do Joseph's words, "Do not be grieved or angry with yourselves" (v. 5), mean for Joseph himself and his brothers in verses 1 to 5?

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Deeper Reflection

Summary of Genesis 42:1 – 45:15: "God, through the famine, initiates the saving process by forcing the family to confront their past and each other. Joseph's harshness also helps to heal the fracture and to restore the family to God. Simeon's detention in Egypt reminds the 10 brothers of how they treated Joseph...Their consciences are awakened to confess their guilt (Ge 42:21-24) and to fear God (Ge 42:28). They take responsibility to retrieve Simeon from prison (Ge 42:19, 24) and protect Benjamin from harm (Ge 42:37; Ge 43:1 – 45:38)...The faith, penitence, tender emotions and loyalty that unite the family are now being fashioned...**the fractured family is being healed.**"⁶ When we have done wrong to God, to others or to ourselves, we feel guilty, ashamed and angry with ourselves – just like Joseph's brothers as reflected in Joseph's redemptive words: "Do not be grieved or angry with yourselves" (vv. 1-5, note v. 5). When we have done wrong, what we need is forgiveness and restoration. In Christ, God forgives and forgets our sins (Jer 31:34), and frees us from suppressed guilt. Then, God says to us, "Don't be angry with yourself." We must say the same to ourselves, and to those who have wronged us.

■ Application

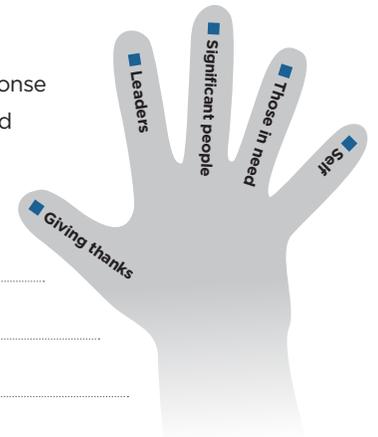
How do I deal with my feelings of guilt?

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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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⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 550

December 3
Thursday
2015

Which Perspective Do I Choose?

■ Scripture

Genesis 45:1-15

■ Observation

What is the theological significance of “you sold me” and “God sent me” (v. 5) in verses 4 to 15?

Deeper Reflection

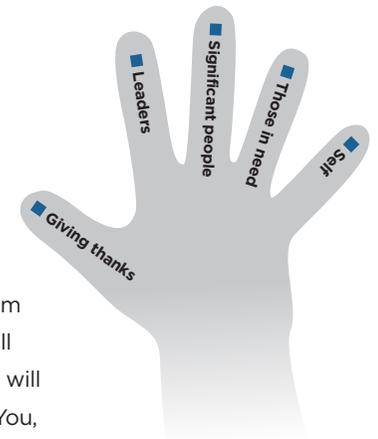
Perspective is vitally important in life. How we look at life determines how we live our lives. In Joseph’s reconciliation speech to his brothers, he presented two perspectives (vv. 1-15): “You sold me” and “God sent me” (v. 5). **Starting Point:** Viewed theologically, Joseph’s journey of “trouble” and “affliction” (Ge 41:51-52) began with “God sent me”, not “you sold me”. “God sent me” is repeated thrice (vv. 5, 7, 8). Joseph emphasized: “it was not you... but God” (v. 8), albeit he was speaking from hindsight. Nonetheless, we must embrace “God sent me” as the starting point for everything that happens to us. **Shaping Process:** “You sold me” is only a means in “God sent me”. The harsh reality is that seeing and feeling the pain of “you sold me” is inescapable and undeniable. God permits us to be honest and real before Him about this: “Why?” (Ps 22:1), “How long?” (Ps 13:1-2). But, we must endure “you sold me” with “God sent me”. **Seeing Point:** Joseph “is able to reinterpret the barbarisms his brothers inflicted upon him as God’s good design to save them through him”⁷ only after many years. When we don’t see God’s purpose now, we stand and stay in “God sent me”.

■ Application

What is a situation in my life that I need to replace the “you sold me” perspective with the “God sent me” perspective?

■ Prayer

Sovereign God, from whom, through whom and to whom are all things. Everything that happens in life, anywhere and at any time, is never an accident or a coincidence, but the presence of Divine Providence, in infinite wisdom and inscrutable mystery, working all things after the counsel of His own will to His glory. Open my eyes to see You, O God! Amen.



⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 559

December 4
Friday
2015

Divine Speech and Divine Silence

■ Scripture

Genesis 45:25-28; 46:1-4

■ Observation

What does God mentioning Joseph to Jacob (Ge 46:4) after a long time since Joseph's "death" (Ge 37:33-35) tell you about God?

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Deeper Reflection

God said to Jacob, "Joseph will close your eyes" (Ge 46:4). Joseph! Jacob suffered "wrongly" and "needlessly" over the "dead" Joseph for 22 years! And God had been silent over this until now. **Transcendent God:** "I am God" (Ge 46:3) – which points to "God's transcendence over time, space and people".⁸ God is God. It is His prerogative to speak or to be silent. **Trustworthy God:** "the God of your father" (Ge 46:3). Genesis 46:2-4 is the last divine speech to the patriarchs. The next divine speech in Israel's sacred history is when God spoke to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:1 – 4:17) "about 430 years later (Ex 12:40)".⁹ In both divine speeches between the 430 years, God revealed Himself as "the God of your father" (Ge 46:3; Ex 3:6) – the covenant God. There is "an intentional link"¹⁰ here. When God is silent for a long time, anchor on the promises and faithfulness of the covenant God. God alone knows best when to speak. Faith does not necessarily mean that God will speak immediately when we seek Him. It takes greater faith to wait in the long divine silence. Divine silence itself is also divine speech (cf. Ps 19:1-3).

■ Application

How does God's silence in my life help me to grow in my discipleship journey?

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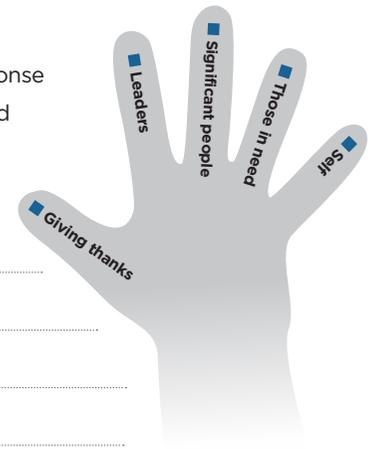
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■ Prayer

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



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⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 574
⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 573
¹⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, 574

December 5
Saturday
2015

Uncomfortable and Insecure in Egypt

■ Scripture

Genesis 46:1-27

■ Observation

What is the significance of God's revelation to Jacob (vv. 1-7) being followed by the genealogy of Jacob (vv. 8-27)?

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Deeper Reflection

Leaving the Promised Land for Egypt (vv. 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 26, 27) seems strange and incongruent to God's covenant calling (cf. Ge 12:1; 28:13; 31:3). But it was God's will (vv. 3-4; cf. Ge 15:13-16). God may have called or put you in an "Egypt" where you feel uncomfortable and insecure. What do you need? **God's Reassuring Presence:** God's reassuring "Do not be afraid" and "I will go down with you" (vv. 3-4) meet the "disquiet in Jacob about the migration out of the Promised Land to Egypt, a land fraught with danger, and out of God's blessing (see 26:2)".¹¹ **God's Covenant Faithfulness:** "I will make you a great nation there" (v. 3). "Egypt is the womb God uses to form His nation."¹² The genealogy of Jacob (vv. 8-27) shows the promise "is already being fulfilled in embryo"¹³ – "from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to 12 sons and now to 70 [v. 27]".¹⁴ God will continue to be faithful. **God's Sovereign Grace:** 70 (v. 27b), a perfect number,¹⁵ signifies that the covenant family "enter[s] Egypt as an ideal and complete nation in miniature"¹⁶ – despite its many weaknesses, shortcomings, failures and troubles (Ge 28-45), underscoring "God's sovereign grace"¹⁷ (2 Co 12:9-10; Heb 4:15-16).

■ Application

How will I live in the uncomfortable and insecure "Egypt" that God has called or put me in?

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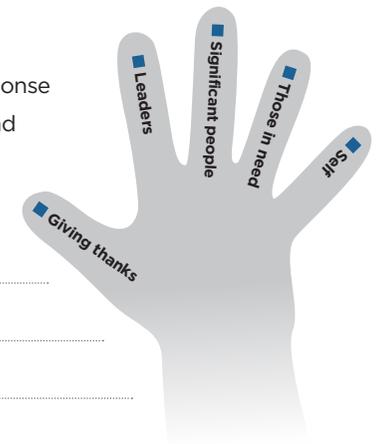
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■ Prayer

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



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¹¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 574
¹² Bruce K. Waltke, 574
¹³ Bruce K. Waltke, 575, citing N. Sarna
¹⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 571
¹⁵ "70 is the multiple of two perfect numbers" (Bruce K. Waltke, 577) – seven and 10.
¹⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 578
¹⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 578

December 6
Sunday
2015

■ **Scripture**

■ **Observation**
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■ **Application**
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■ **Prayer**
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The Past Week

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
December 2015 – Week 1
BEING ACCUSED

Not fighting back when being accused of wrongdoing.

Scripture - Genesis 39:11-21; Psalm 135:14

1. Activity Bite

Think of some accusations such as “You stole the cookies” or “You told lies about your friend”. Write each of them down on separate pieces of paper. Fold them in half and mix them in a box. Take turns to pick the pieces of paper and read them out loud as if the accusations are directed at you.

2. Chat Time

Q1: If you were accused of something you did not do and you get punished for it, how would you feel?

Q2: Imagine Joseph was an angry man. How would he have responded when he was wrongly accused?

Q3: Why did God bless Joseph so much (Ge 39:21)? In what way did Joseph’s response show that he trusted God?

3. Learning Point

It is normal for anyone to feel angry or hurt when being accused of something he did not do. He may speak out to defend himself or even take revenge to get even. But that is not God’s way – His ways are always the ways of love and humility. You may either choose to fight back or let God do it His way to defend and clear your name when blamed. Surely, letting God take charge is the best way since He is very wise and powerful. He will do it for us because He is faithful to keep His promise to defend (Ps 135:14). So the next time you are being wronged, look to God and say, “He will defend me!”

4. Action Point

Look at the pieces of paper from the earlier activity. Say “God will defend me from wrongful accusations!” over them or read Psalm 135:14 together. Remind yourself to do this whenever you are wrongly accused.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Thank You, Lord, for being my defender. I don’t have to fight my battles alone because You are with me. Help me respond with love instead. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

December 8
Tuesday
2015

Best Land in Famine

■ Scripture

Genesis 47:5-6 with 45:16-20

■ Observation

What is the significance of Pharaoh giving Jacob and his family “the best of the land of Egypt” (Ge 45:16-20; 47:5-6)?

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Deeper Reflection

Being in the Promised Land is being in God’s will. Perhaps, you are facing a “severe famine” in “the land” (Ge 43:1). On the surface, you can only see things turning out for the worse. It is hard to imagine how things can get better – short of a miracle. This must have been how Jacob thought and felt. But God can surprise you, and give you the “best land” right in the midst of “severe famine”. Under Divine Providence, the severe famine in Canaan led Jacob to an unexpected reunion with Joseph in Egypt. And there Pharaoh gave Jacob “the best of the land of Egypt” and “the fat of the land” – “the best land for agriculture (cf. Nu 20:5),”²¹ and there Jacob “shall eat the choicest products”²² (Ge 45:18; Ge 47:6). Pharaoh made that commitment before Jacob’s arrival (Ge 45:16-20), and kept his commitment after Jacob arrived (vv. 5-6). But at the heart of Pharaoh’s commitment is **God’s faithful word** (Ge 46:1-4). Everything happens to Jacob in Egypt is God keeping His word. God is the primary source of the “best land” in “severe famine”. Pharaoh, with his immensely generous hospitality, is only a secondary source in **God’s sovereign hand**. However, the “best land” must be as God defines it, not us.

■ Application

How does the principle of God giving the “best land in severe famine” help me in my personal discipleship journey?

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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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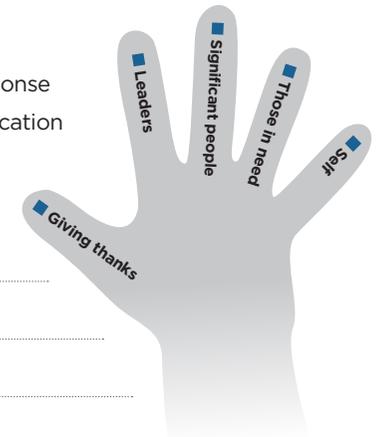
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²¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 571
²² Gordon J. Wenham, Genesis 16-50, Word Biblical Commentary (Word Books, 1994), 429

December 9
Wednesday
2015

“Few and Unpleasant” Years

■ Scripture

Genesis 47:7-10

■ Observation

What is the significance of Jacob’s confession “few and unpleasant have been the years of my life” being sandwiched by “Jacob blessed Pharaoh” (vv. 7-10)?

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Deeper Reflection

Jacob confessed to Pharaoh that his days had been “few and unpleasant” (v. 9) – “few and filled with trouble”,²³ “emphasising the calamitous times he had experienced”,²⁴ “much of it of his own doing”.²⁵ In Hebrew, “unpleasant” literally means “evil” – the antithesis of “good” in Genesis. “Few and unpleasant” years may sound like your life. But it is, like Jacob’s, a spiritual journey of transformation of a self-centered Jacob to a God-centered Israel. As you recognise how some of the “unpleasant” times were of your own doing, let not the “If only I have” and “If only I have not” terrorise and paralyse you. God is wisely capable and lovingly committed to you to “work all things” – including evil things – “together for good” (Ro 8:28), and “make up to you for the years” eaten by the locusts (Joel 2:25). Only keep asking “How have I been growing more God-centered?” Framing Jacob’s “few and unpleasant” years is “Jacob blessed Pharaoh” (vv. 7, 10). This is God’s covenant calling for Jacob: God’s redemptive blessings for the nations (Ge 28:14; cf. Ge 12:3; Ge 18:18; Ge 22:18; Ge 26:4). God intends to use your life of “few and unpleasant” times to bless others.

■ Application

How will I respond to the troubled times of my life, including those that are of my own doing?

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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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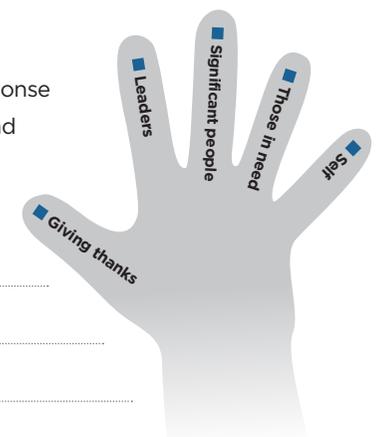
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²³ Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Baker, 1998, 1996), 686
²⁴ Allen P. Ross, 686
²⁵ Allen P. Ross, 686

December 10
Thursday
2015

Do Not Stereotype God

■ Scripture

Genesis 12:10-20; 26:1-2; 47:11-13

■ Observation

What do you observe about God in Abraham's, Isaac's and Jacob's encounter with famine in the Promised Land (vv. 10-20; Ge 26:1-2; Ge 47:11-13)?

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Deeper Reflection

All the three covenant patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – experienced famine in the Promised Land. During their time, Egypt was “the traditional source of food”.²⁶ The general practice then was this: When there was famine, Egypt was the place to go to. During the famine in Abraham's time (v. 10), he went down to Egypt to get food. But, he did not have divine approval, nor did Abraham seek God for direction.²⁷ Abraham acted in faithlessness and disobedience, but God delivered him (vv. 11-20). In Isaac's time, God spoke to him clearly, “Do not go down to Egypt” (Ge 26:1-2). And now in Jacob's time, even “the traditional source of food” – Egypt – was hit (Ge 47:13). For this famine, God prepared Joseph ahead in Egypt, and directed Jacob and his family to go to Egypt. It was more than just for provision of food, but for Israel to remain in Egypt for a long time according to God's plan (Ge 46:1-4; Ge 15:13-16). We observe here that God's will and God's ways are different for the same kind of situation. We must guard against stereotyping God by this faulty theology: “What God did for me, He will do exactly the same for you.”

■ Application

What are the ways I stereotype God that I need to change?

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■ Prayer

Keep me, O God, from making You in the image of man and putting You in a box! Help me to be aware that when I prayerfully read Your Word to seek to know You, I stand on holy ground. Give me Spiritual enlightenment that I may see and know You as You are, and yet recognise that my knowledge of the Infinite God will always be finite and incomplete. Amen.



²⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 368

²⁷ See *Devotional Journal* 2015, April 10

December 11
Friday
2015

Blessed Life in Famine

■ Scripture

Genesis 47:11-27

■ Observation

What is the significance of verses 13 to 26 being framed by verses 11 to 12 and verse 27?

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Deeper Reflection

Verses 11 to 27 portray a blessed life in famine. What constitutes that kind of life? **Given the Privilege of Grace:** The Egyptians suffering the “very severe” famine (vv. 13-26) is framed by Israel “settled” in “the best of the land” in Egypt where food was abundantly provided (vv. 11-12), and Israel “acquired property... were fruitful and became very numerous” “in the land of Egypt” (v. 17). What an irony and contrast! As sojourners in Egypt, Israel was richly blessed by God, whereas the Egyptians themselves, in order to survive, spent all their money (vv. 13-15), then sold their “livestock” (vv. 16-17), and eventually their “lands” and “bodies” (vv. 18-22). God can make us, His people, stand taller and live better than others in the world. But it is always and only by God’s grace – and for His redemptive purposes. **Chosen to Serve People:** Joseph, filled with “the Spirit of God”, was “discerning and wise” (Ge 41:38-39; see Dt 4:5-6 – “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people”) to “preserve many people alive” (Ge 50:20). In the words of the grateful Egyptians: “You have saved our lives!” (v. 25). A blessing to the nations (Ge 12:3; Ge 18:18; Ge 22:18; Ge 26:4; Ge 28:14). We are called to serve to save (Mk 10:45; 2 Co 4:5).

■ Application

In what ways can I turn God’s blessings on me into blessings to others?

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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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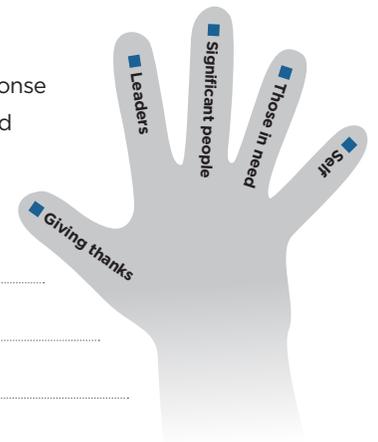
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December 12
Saturday
2015

Good Times, Bad Times

■ Scripture

Genesis 47:11-12, 27; Exodus 1:1-11

■ Observation

What is the link between verses 11 to 12 and 27 and Exodus 1:1-11?

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Deeper Reflection

God made Israel stand taller and live better than the Egyptians in their very own land – a privilege of God’s grace. And this came about through Joseph: “Pharaoh and his courtiers favour Joseph’s family because they look upon Joseph with favour. Pharaoh’s offer of the best land in Egypt to Joseph’s family [Ge 45:16-20; Ge 47:5-6] is a proper response of gratitude to the man who saves Egypt and secures all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh [Ge 47:13-26].”²⁸ But good times, albeit from God, is never guaranteed to last forever. The “entire situation” in verses 11 to 27 “informs the meaning of Exodus 1:8-11, which states that a new king came to power and did not know who Joseph was [v. 8]”²⁹ There is an intentional link between “Israel lived in the land of Egypt...were fruitful and became numerous” (v. 27) – in good times, and Israel was “fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty” – in bad times (v.7). When good times are gone, the good God is not. And He never will be. We must learn to see in “all the hardship” “all the goodness” of God (Ex 17:8-9). And everlasting good times are eschatological (Rev 21:1-5).

■ Application

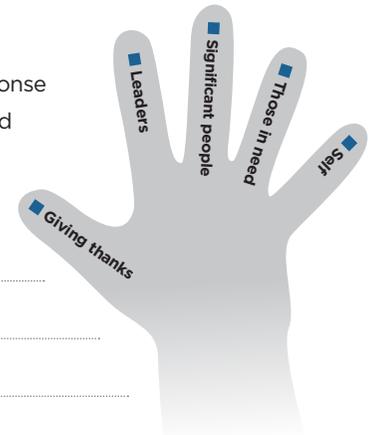
In which area(s) of my life do I need to learn to see the good God of good times and bad?

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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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²⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 571
²⁹ Allen P. Ross, 687

December 13
Sunday
2015

■ **Scripture**

■ **Observation**

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■ **Application**

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■ **Prayer**

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The Past Week

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
December 2015 – Week 2

BE RESPONSIBLE

God looks for people who are responsible to do His work.

Scripture - Genesis 41:37-46

1. Activity Bite

List down what you think are the responsibilities of a son or daughter, and also a student. For parents, write down your list of responsibilities as a father or mother too. Compare the lists.

2. Chat Time

Q1: Share with everyone how you have honestly fulfilled those responsibilities on your list.

Q2: Why is it a good thing to be responsible to carry out the tasks given to you?

Q3: What problems can we cause when we are irresponsible?

3. Learning Point

In Genesis 41, Joseph showed himself to be responsible in doing even the little things that were given to him. Hence, Pharaoh could trust him to take care of bigger things. Likewise, we want others to trust us to do things. But we must show ourselves to be trustworthy and responsible. God has lots of things for us to do while we are on earth and He is looking for those who are responsible enough to do His work, even in the little things.

4. Action Point

Ask your parents to show you which tasks you have not been doing responsibly. Commit to completing them in the coming week.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

Dear God, help me to learn how to be responsible in every task given to me. I want to be useful in Your kingdom. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

December 14
Monday
2015

Knowing God: Anchor and Compass

■ Scripture

Genesis 47:28 – 48:7

■ Observation

What is the significance of Jacob recalling the first time God spoke to him at Bethel (Ge 47:2-7; cf. Ge 28:10-15)?

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Deeper Reflection

“The time for Israel to die drew near” (v. 29), and he was “sick” (v. 1). Jacob died of sickness (so did Elisha, 2 Ki 13:14). Genesis presents Jacob in his last days as a man who knows his God. Such a person has the Word of God as the anchor and compass for his/her life. His/her life is grounded in and guided by God’s Word. Foundational to Jacob’s life was “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz [Bethel] in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and **He said to me**” (vv. 3-4). There God spoke to him for the first time (Ge 28:10-15), and he lived by that Word of God until his last days. That was Jacob’s life reference point. Holding on to God’s promise of the land – “and will give this land to your descendants after you” (v. 4), Jacob “stakes his destiny in the sworn land, not in an embalmed body in the best land of Egypt”³⁰ (vv. 29-31). In light of God’s promise, “I will make you fruitful and numerous” (v. 4), Jacob adopted Joseph’s two sons to be his own (vv. 5-6), forming two tribes. In the past, present and future of his three-steps-forward, two-steps-back discipleship journey, Jacob followed God’s Word.

■ Application

What does it mean for me to make the Word of God as the anchor and compass of my life?

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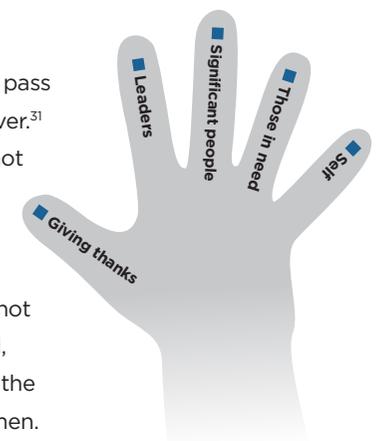
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■ Prayer

Eternal God, heaven and earth will pass away, but Your Word endures forever.³¹ You are God, not man, so You do not lie. You are not human, so You do not change Your mind. Have You ever spoken and failed to act? Have You ever promised and not carried it through?³² O faithful God, help me to make Your living Word the anchor and compass of my life. Amen.



³⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, 592
³¹ Matthew 24:25
³² Numbers 23:19

December 15
Tuesday
2015

Knowing God: Blind, but Sees

■ Scripture

Genesis 48:8-22

■ Observation

What does Jacob's insisting on blessing Ephraim with the firstborn blessing instead of Manasseh, despite Joseph's objection, tell us about Jacob in verses 8 to 22?

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Deeper Reflection

Jacob adopted Joseph's two sons as his own (Ge 48:5-6), and was about to bless them (vv. 8-9). "Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see" when Joseph brought his two sons close to him (v. 10). Joseph "stage-managed the setting to give Manasseh the greater blessing by placing him under the right hand [of Jacob], the position of strength, honour, power and glory"³³ (v. 13). But Jacob "stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn" (v. 14). That displeased Joseph. So, "he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head" (v. 17). But Jacob "refused" (v. 18). When Jacob deceived his father to steal the blessing intended for Esau (Ge 27), Isaac was "old and his eyes were too dim to see" (v. 1). Back then, Isaac was confused and unsure (vv. 20-24). But now, Jacob, in a similar condition, said to Joseph, "I know, my son, I know" (v. 19). Here's Jacob's spiritual sensitivity: Jacob "though almost blind, knows and deliberately follows God's unconventional plan".³⁴ Blind, but sees!

■ Application

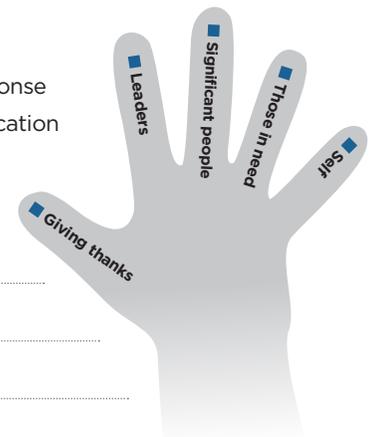
How do I gauge my spiritual sensitivity to God in concrete terms?

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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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³³ Bruce K. Waltke, 598

³⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 600

December 16
Wednesday
2015

Knowing God: “All My Life”

■ Scripture

Genesis 48:15-16

■ Observation

What is a conclusion that Jacob made about his lifelong discipleship journey in verses 15 to 16?

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Deeper Reflection

Half of Genesis covers the life of Jacob: from his birth (Ge 25:21-26) to his death and burial (Ge 50:1-14). We see his discipleship journey under God’s transformational discipline and development from self-centeredness to God-centeredness. How did Jacob view God towards the end of his life? **Covenant God:** “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked” (v. 15a). Jacob grew to know the Covenant God at various pivotal points of his spiritual pilgrimage (Ge 28:13-15; Ge 31:3-13, Ge 42; Ge 35:9-12; Ge 46:1-4). He experienced God’s covenant love and faithfulness, of which he confessed he was unworthy (Ge 32:10). **Shepherd God:** God “has been my shepherd all my life to this day” (v. 15b). Very personal – “my shepherd”. Ever present – “all my life to this day”. This God had been watching, caring, providing, keeping, leading, guiding and restoring Jacob in his many shortcomings, setbacks and sufferings, which Genesis tells us were more than those of Abraham or Isaac. **Redeeming God:** “the Angel” (“the parallelism strongly suggests equating God”³⁵) “who has redeemed me from all evil” (v. 16a). Paul echoed a similar conviction in his imprisonment (2 Ti 4:18). Am I on a journey towards “I know my God all my life”?

■ Application

How will I move on towards knowing God “all my life to this day”?

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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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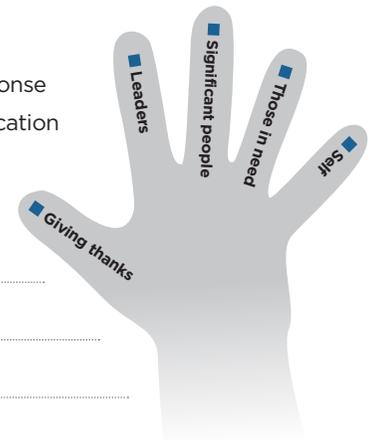
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³⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, 599

December 17
Thursday
2015

God's Final Word Is "Blessing"

■ Scripture

Genesis 49:1-28

■ Observation

How does the Book of Genesis come to its end in verses 1 to 28 (note vv. 1-2, 28)?

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Deeper Reflection

The narrative of Genesis, which begins with God's blessing of creation (Ge 1:22, 28), now ends with Jacob pronouncing his blessings on his children (vv. 1-28, note v. 28). Three "Blessing" movements in Genesis: Creation – Intention for Blessing (Ge 1-2); Corruption – Disruption by Curse (Ge 3-11); and Covenant – Restoration of Blessing (Ge 12-50),³⁶ through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and his 12 sons, from which "a great nation" would be formed to be a blessing to the nations (Ge 12:1-3; Ge 18:18; Ge 22:18; Ge 26:4; Ge 28:14). These God-chosen people of faith (He 11:8-22) were fallible, frail, fragile jars of clay, just like us. But God never abandoned them – and us. God lovingly, graciously, patiently and faithfully continues His transformative work in our lives to be channels of His redemptive blessings. And God's final Word to them and us is blessing (vv. 1-28). Four centuries later, Israel as a nation repeated the same pattern of great shortcomings in Exodus to Deuteronomy. Despite anticipating Israel's covenant unfaithfulness, even before they possessed the Promised Land (Dt 31:14-29), God's final Word to Israel at the end of the Pentateuch³⁷ is blessing (Dt 33, see vv. 1, 29).

■ Application

How does knowing that God's final word is "blessing" affect me in my three-steps-forward, two-steps-back discipleship journey?

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■ Prayer

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every Spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ!³⁸ It is only through the blood of Your Son that You can and have blessed us in such a manner. You have shown Your heart: How much You want to bless us, we the redeemed sinners! I am ever grateful to You for Your immense grace. Amen.



³⁶ See *Devotional Journal* 2015, January 27, 28, 29

³⁷ The first five books of the Bible

³⁸ Ephesians 1:3

December 18
Friday
2015

Unique Destinies within a Common Destiny

■ Scripture

Genesis 49:28

■ Observation

What do you observe about Jacob's blessing of his sons in verse 28?

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Deeper Reflection

The purpose of Genesis 49:1-28 is “the identification of the 12 tribes of Israel and of their individual blessings prophesying their **unique destinies** within their **common destiny** as a nation”.³⁹

The Church has a destiny that is common for all her members: authentic discipleship – maturing in Christ-like character (Eph 4:11-13), and intentional discipling – being a blessing to the nations (Mt 28:18-20). God intends for us to be a blessing from the inside out. We become “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Mt 5:13-16) when we bear the character of the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12). Each one of us has a unique destiny (“everyone with the blessing appropriate to him”, v. 28), which God shows us over time as we walk with Him faithfully (like Jacob). Jacob’s “differentiated blessings” “correspond to the way human life always works. Different people have more brain power or more physical skills, or live in more favourable climates or more peaceful times. For the brothers and for us, the question is what we do with what we have”⁴⁰ – stewardship of God’s grace upon us (1 Pe 4:10). But, our unique destinies are meant to be lived out within our common destiny as a Church.

■ Application

How will I live out my unique destiny within the common destiny of the Church?

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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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³⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 603
⁴⁰ John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone, Part II: Chapters 17-50* (SPCK, 2010), 176

December 19
 Saturday
 2015

Seeing Blessings as God Sees

■ **Scripture**

Genesis 49:3-7, 28

■ **Observation**

How can Jacob's prophetic announcements on Reuben, Simeon and Levi (vv. 3-7) be considered as blessings (v. 28)?

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Deeper Reflection

Jacob's prophetic pronouncements on Reuben, Simeon and Levi (vv. 3-7) are virtually negative in nature. How could these be considered as blessings (v. 28)? They are "paradoxically" "anti-blessings".⁴¹ God "blesses the tribes but not independently from their character"⁴²; for Reuben, his immorality (v. 4; cf. Ge 35:22); for Levi and Simeon, their violence (vv. 5-7; cf. Ge 34:25-30). Collectively in corporate solidarity, "the descendants share the praise and blame together with their fathers" just like "the whole human race with the original sin of Adam and Eve".⁴³ However, the "anti-blessings are a blessing"⁴⁴; "in the best interest of the nation...they curb the baser elements of the tribes".⁴⁵ "By demoting Reuben for his turbulence and uncontrolled sex drive, Jacob saves Israel from reckless leadership. Likewise, by cursing the cruelty of Simeon and Levi, he restricts their cruel rashness from dominating."⁴⁶ God's judgment on us as a form of discipline is a blessing, because it is redemptive, not punitive ("so that we will not be condemned along with the world", 1 Co 11:32). For Israel, and us, "Through all this [Ge 49:1-28], the family remains the carrier of God's blessing into the future, as it was in the past."⁴⁷

■ **Application**

How can I see blessings as God sees them?

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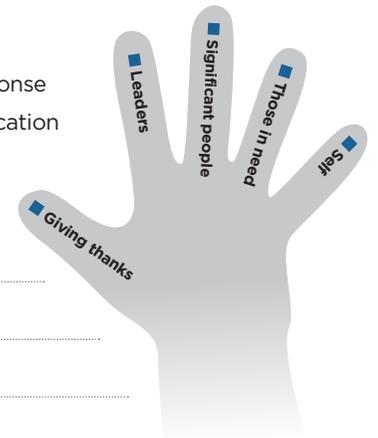
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■ **Prayer**

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



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⁴¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 603
⁴² Bruce K. Waltke, 615
⁴³ Bruce K. Waltke, 615
⁴⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, 603
⁴⁵ Bruce K. Waltke, 615
⁴⁶ Bruce K. Waltke, 603
⁴⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 615 – citing E. F. Roop

December 20
Sunday
2015

■ **Scripture**

■ **Observation**
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■ **Application**
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■ **Prayer**
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The Past Week

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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December 21
Monday
2015

Single-minded Longing for the Promised Land

■ Scripture

Genesis 49:29-33

■ Observation

What is the significance of the particular details given in Jacob's instructions to his sons for his burial in verses 29 to 32?

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Deeper Reflection

Jacob at his deathbed was his “finest hour”,⁴⁸ where he expressed his “longing for the land of his ancestors”⁴⁹: “Bury me...in the land of Canaan” (vv. 29-30). “Bury” and “burial-site” are altogether repeated 14 times in Genesis 49:29 – 50:14 (vv. 29, 30, 31; Ge 50:5, 6, 7, 13, 14) to underscore this key motif. “Jacob’s mind was full of the promise of God.”⁵⁰ Jacob’s “fundamental commitment”⁵¹ to the Promised Land is also demonstrated in “and there I buried Leah” (v. 31). He chose not to bury with Rachel, whom he loved most, at Ephrath (Ge 35:19-20). “Renouncing even his love for Rachel, his last words instruct his sons to bury him with his unloved wife so he can rest in faith with his fathers.”⁵² Our Promised Land is “heaven” where “our citizenship is...from which we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Php 3:20-21). Is this what I long for and where I look at in life, and accordingly what I live by and live for? “Christian history moved...from a period of fervent eschatological expectation of the earliest community to a period of bourgeois accommodation to the on-going world”⁵³ “in which the fervent expectation disappears”.⁵⁴ Is this also true of us today?

■ Application

What is my love and longing for the Second Coming of Christ like?

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■ Prayer

Forgive me, Lord, for setting my mind on the things of this earth and giving my life to be consumed by them. O foolish me! Why should I invest in and build things only to be destroyed by You at Your glorious coming?⁵⁵ Teach me to develop a pilgrim mentality and live for the imperishable things. Grant me to love and long for Your appearing.⁵⁶ Amen.



⁴⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 617

⁴⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 616

⁵⁰ W. H. Griffith Thomas, *The Pentateuch: Chapter by Chapter* (Kregel, 1957), 73

⁵¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 616

⁵² Bruce K. Waltke, 617

⁵³ Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2005), 489

⁵⁴ Frank Thielman, 489

⁵⁵ 2 Peter 3:10

⁵⁶ 2 Timothy 4:8

December 22
Tuesday
2015

My Glory and Lifter of My Head

■ Scripture

Genesis 50:1-14

■ Observation

What is the significance of the narrator giving a detailed description of Jacob's death and burial in verses 1 to 14?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis 50 verses 1 to 14: "The Egyptians mourn Jacob for two and a half months as they would mourn their king. The skilled physicians embalm him for 40 days [v. 3], and the most senior dignitaries both from Pharaoh's own court and from the whole empire bear Jacob's body homeward from Egypt to Canaan in a grand and grave funeral cortege [vv. 7, 9]."⁵⁷ It is "a picture of the patriarch as an exalted king".⁵⁸ Neither Abraham's nor Isaac's burial was anything near that. What a glorious end to Jacob's life of "few and unpleasant" years (Ge 47:9)! Jesus entered Jerusalem as "the King of Israel", cheered and celebrated by a "large crowd" (Jn 12:12-15), but only to end up crucified as "the King of the Jews" (Jn 19:19). But the cross is the glory of Jesus (Jn 12:23-24). When we humble ourselves or are humbled "under God's mighty hand", God will exalt us "at the proper time" (1 Pe 5:6; Lk 14:11). If we are not exalted on earth, certainly we will be eschatologically. When we are surrounded by many adversaries and suffer many adversities, "the Spirit of glory rests on" us (1 Pe 4:14), and we can say, "God is my glory and the lifter of my head" (Ps 3:1-3).

■ Application

How do I place God's promise of exaltation to His faithful followers in my personal discipleship journey?

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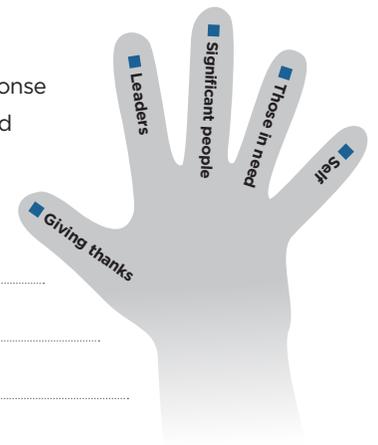
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■ Prayer

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



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⁵⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 617
⁵⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, 616

December 23
Wednesday
2015

What Keeps a Redeemed Family Together?

■ Scripture

Genesis 50:15-21

■ Observation

What does the conversation between Joseph and his brothers in verses 15 to 21 tell us about forgiveness?

Deeper Reflection

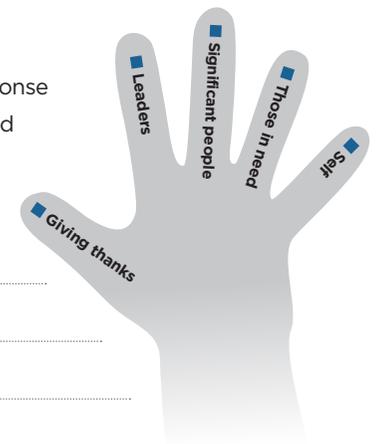
Verses 15 to 17: “The loss of an authoritative, restraining father might have threatened the cohesion of a family in which brothers had so wronged another.”⁵⁹ Jacob’s family was redeemed by God to be a channel of His redemptive blessings to the nations. Thus, it is critical that a redeemed family (husband and wife, parents and children, the church) must not be disunited. What keeps a redeemed family together? “Forgive” is the key word here (v. 17): forgiving one another (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13). For it is inevitable that we will wrong or hurt one another. Forgiving one another is so vitally important that it is conditional to divine forgiveness (Mt 6:15). Joseph’s brothers somehow lacked the assurance of Joseph’s forgiveness, and made a fabrication to secure his forgiveness (vv. 16-17), even when Joseph through “17 years of kindness to them”⁶⁰ had “given them no reason to think that he is vindictive”⁶¹ (cf. Ge 45:1-8). Forgive with great assurance and abundance like Joseph: “Do not be afraid” – repeated twice (Ge 19, 21a); “he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (literally ‘spoke to their heart’ – an expression ‘used in difficult situations’⁶²)” (Ge 21b).

■ Application

What challenges do I face in forgiving anyone for any and any amount of wrong done to me, and how will I deal with them?

■ Prayer

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



⁵⁹ Bruce K. Waltke, 617

⁶⁰ Bruce K. Waltke, 622

⁶¹ Bruce K. Waltke, 622

⁶² Bruce K. Waltke, 623

December 25
Friday
2015

Living with an “Egypt-and-Canaan” Bifocal Vision

■ Scripture

Genesis 50:22-26

■ Observation

What do you observe about Joseph in verses 22 to 26?

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Deeper Reflection

“The movement to Canaan in a grand funeral procession [Ge 50:1-14] symbolises the holy family’s commitment to Canaan even though they must remain yet in Egypt.”⁶⁷ God has called Israel – and us – to live with an “Egypt-and-Canaan” bifocal vision. **Earthly Duties (Egypt):** After burying Jacob in Canaan, “Joseph returned to Egypt” (Ge 50:5, 14) and “stayed” there (v. 22). Following God’s call, Joseph still had his duties to fulfil in Egypt. Our Egypt is the world we live in as exiles and sojourners (Ge 47:4; 1 Pe 1:1; 2:11), where we “build homes, plant gardens, marry and have children, work for the peace and prosperity of the city, pray for its welfare”, just as God commanded Israel to do in Babylon (Jer 29:4-7, NLT), fulfilling our earthly responsibilities faithfully in the Lord (Col 3:23). **Eschatological Destination (Canaan):** Having lived in Egypt for 93 years,⁶⁸ yet what filled Joseph’s heart with hope was the Promised Land, as reflected in his last words (vv. 24-25). Promised Land living in Egypt means living “with perseverance as we wait eagerly” for “the hope of the glory of God” (Ro 5:2 with Ro 8:24-25), longing deeply, “Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20).

■ Application

What does it mean for me to live my life with an “Egypt-and-Canaan” bifocal vision?

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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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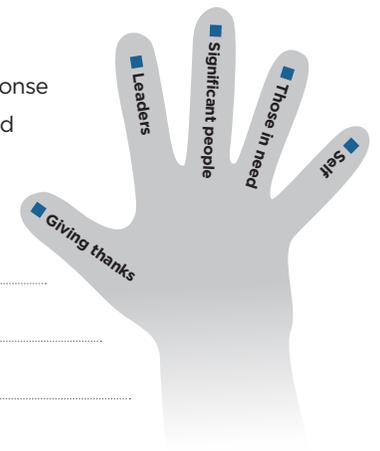
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⁶⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, 616

⁶⁸ Joseph arrived in Egypt at age 17 (Ge 37:2), and he lived 110 years.

December 26
Saturday
2015

Theology of “From Creation to Coffin”

■ Scripture

Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 50:24-26

■ Observation

What is the significance of the Book of Genesis beginning with creation (v. 1) and ending with “coffin” (Ge 50:24-26)?

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Deeper Reflection

Genesis begins with “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (v. 1) and ends with “in a coffin in Egypt” (Ge 50:26). What is the theological connection? The crown of God’s creation is human beings, created in God’s image (Ge 1:27). Creation was filled with good, blessings and life. But when humans sinned against God, evil, curses and death invaded and occupied creation (Ge 3). God purposed to restore to His creation the good, blessings and life through His covenant with the patriarchs and their descendants, Israel (Ge 12-50). “Coffin” speaks of death – a contrast to life in creation at the beginning. Genesis ends with death, but Genesis is not the end of God’s redemptive story. When things in our lives are beyond our control, it is like death. We think, “It’s over! There’s no more hope!” God’s redemption of creation continues through the “coffin”. The context of the “coffin” is Joseph’s faith in God to fulfil His covenant promise (Ge 50:24-25; Heb 11:22). Moses carried Joseph’s bones out of Egypt (Ex 13:19), and Joshua buried them in Canaan (Jos 24:32). Faith in the faithful God when we are in a “coffin”! We live by faith, and we also die in faith (Heb 10:38; Heb 11:13) – for “a better resurrection” (Heb 11:35).

■ Application

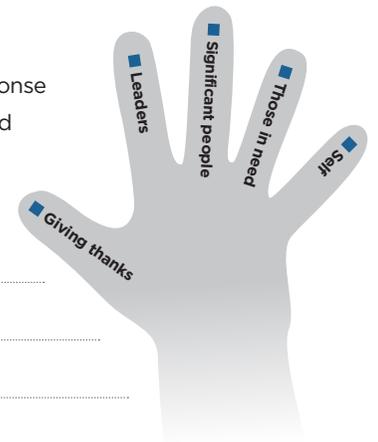
How do I live by the principle “live by faith and die in faith” in the “coffin” challenges of my life?

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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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December 27
Sunday
2015

■ Scripture

■ Observation
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■ Application
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■ Prayer
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The Past Week

REVIEW

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

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What gave me life and what drained me?

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How was the Spirit of God at work?

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REFLECT

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

RESPOND

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

COMMIT IN PRAYER

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL
December 2015 – Week 4
GRAIN FOR THE FAMINE

We can do something to help those in famine.

Scripture - Genesis 41:56-57; Matthew 5:16

1. Activity Bite

Do a search on the Internet regarding the struggles that people are going through in countries that are facing a time of famine. List down the kind of help that these people need.

2. Chat Time

Q1: Why do you think children will suffer the most in times of famine?

Q2: How do you think rich countries like Singapore and America should help?

Q3: Referring to Matthew 5:16, how do you think God wants you to help those children who are struggling in times of famine?

3. Learning Point

When you look at a picture of a starving child, how does that make you feel? Would you feel happy if you could pass a cup of water and a loaf of bread to that child? I am sure you would. But you may also feel helpless, wondering if it is even possible for you to help them. God sees the heart more than how capable you are. He can use you to do great things as long as you commit yourself to Him. You can do things like:

- Pray for the starving children.
- Find out more about organisations that do good works in helping people in poor countries. They may allow you to donate some money through them. Get a group of your friends to raise some funds.
- Go on a missions trip with your parents.

4. Action Point

Talk to your parents to see what you can do together to help children who are suffering in countries that are facing a time of famine. Ask God to guide you.

5. Prayer Power

(Ask your children to pray after you.)

God, I know You have placed me here to bless those children who are suffering because of famine. Show me how I can help so that I can be Your light in the world. Amen.

December 29
Tuesday
2015

A Divine Pathway: Knowing God's Truth

■ Scripture

Psalm 43:1-3

■ Observation

What is the significance of God's light and truth in the context of verses 1 and 2?

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Deeper Reflection

The second of the prophetic burdens is a recognition of the present times. There is rampant nominalism and powerlessness in Christianity in these days that we live. The psalmist gives a picture of the dark days that he experiences – ungodliness, deceptions, injustice and oppression by the enemy. Many of us may identify with this in the work we do and the people we meet. Beyond that, the world that we live in is one that is increasingly hostile to Christianity, both in terms of physical threats of extremism as well as through the pervasiveness of prevailing cultures and worldviews. However, God assures us of the hope that we have. The world is dark, but it is God's light and truth that shows us the way forward. God's light and God's truth is the Word of God. In this increasingly grey world, our only anchor is the Word of God. However, knowing the Word of God is not for knowledge's sake. Verse 3 tells us that light and truth will lead us into God's dwelling – yet the significance of God's dwelling is not primarily a place, but a Person. The Bible ultimately reveals who God is. When we anchor on God's Word, we will come back to knowing God – our ultimate Hope.

■ Application

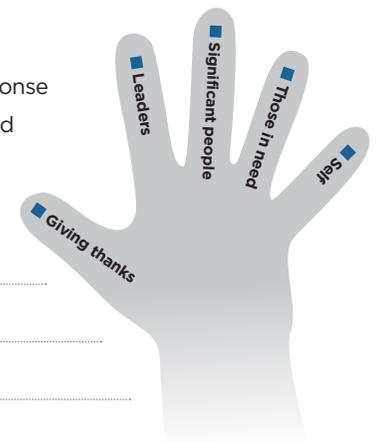
In what ways can I grow in the discipline of studying the Scripture so as to know God more?

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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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December 30
Wednesday
2015

A Distinctive Posture: Knowing God's Way

■ Scripture

Genesis 24

■ Observation

What are the marks of true servanthood as demonstrated by Abraham's servant in Genesis 24?

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Deeper Reflection

The third of the prophetic burdens centre on the way we serve as we look towards Vision 2028. Having the right posture is critical in serving God. We can see this in Abraham's servant who was tasked to find a wife for Isaac. Note the servant's posture - **He was not presumptuous**. He listened and clarified before acting (v. 5). He planned and made preparations (v. 10) and was determined to fulfil the calling given (v. 33). He knew his position as a servant (v. 34) and spoke well of his master. **He depended on God**. He prayed to God (vv. 12-14), waited upon God and worshipped God when God answered his prayer (vv. 26-27). He recognised the hand of God at work (vv. 48-49). **He stayed faithful to his calling**. He had a sense of urgency (v. 56), and was not distracted nor delayed. These are the marks of a true servant! Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in Genesis and "servant" was mentioned nine times, yet we do not know his name. The servant appeared at a critical point of the narrative and disappeared immediately once he accomplished what he was called to do. That is another mark of a true servant: be nameless! In other words, a true servant is **humble**! Similarly, that is also Covenant EFC's distinctive posture: to be nameless even when we become numberless.

■ Application

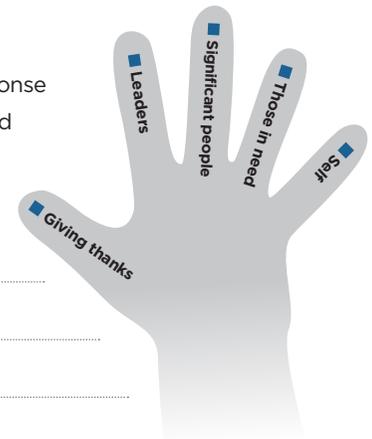
How can I grow in these marks as I serve God?

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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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December 31
Thursday
2015

A Defining Choice: Abide in God’s Word

■ Scripture

Psalm 1

■ Observation

What do you observe about the person who chooses to walk in righteousness?

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Deeper Reflection

The person who chooses righteousness will not participate in the ways of the wicked. “Wicked” is used four times in this Psalm of six verses and is used in contrast to the righteous way of God. We constantly battle with this choice: righteousness (God’s way of holy living) or wickedness (worldly values that contradict God’s truth). A warning is given in verse 1 – the choice of wickedness is gradual and subtle. It starts by “walking” – associating with the values, then “standing” – embracing the values, then “sitting” – loving the values that they will define us. As we come to the last day of this year, Psalm 1 reminds us that we are to keep choosing righteous living. We can make this right **choice** when we choose to continually **abide in God’s Word**, which will lead us to **delight in God’s will** and therefore **walk in God’s way**. The result of this abiding is likened to a flourishing tree firmly planted beside streams of water, with roots deepened in the soil, carrying the necessary nutrients to allow the tree to bear fruit (v. 3). This person is said to be “blessed”. Have you been blessed this year?

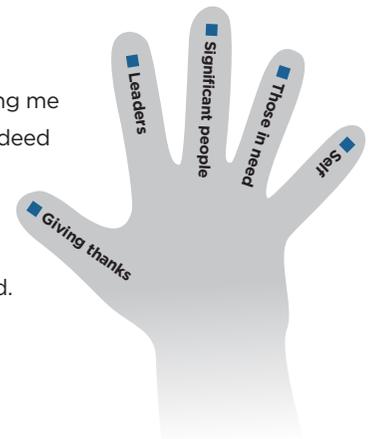
■ Application

As I look back on the year, in what specific ways have I grown in my walk with God?

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■ Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for carrying me through the year. Your Word has indeed been the lamp to my feet and the light to my path (Ps 119:105). Help me not only to love Your Word but to obey whatever You have said. Amen.



COVENANT EFC

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