

Reading Schedule for February 13-19, 2017

We will read through the conclusion of Jacob returning and the launch of the life of Joseph. Joseph's life is nothing but fascinating. He is a prideful young man, as you will read, but God has big plans for him. He could not use Joseph in his present state of mind, but the circumstances that God allows will shape his life. I am confident that our journey through these later chapters of Genesis will indeed be inspiring.

February 13 – Genesis 33:1-20: “But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.” (v.4) There is evidence of God's work in both Esau's life and Jacob's as well. Esau had every right, humanly speaking, to be bitter. But he had changed. Jacob shows a great deal of courage as he risks the uncertain reuniting with his brother. Thank goodness the wounds had been healed and the brothers were able to see that the relationship was more important than their own disappointments. Even as I spoke on this past Sunday, we must be willing to take risks for the betterment of those we love. Jacob did just that, trusting that God had touched his brother's heart. And that is exactly what happened. How are you inspired by this story?

February 14 – Genesis 34:1-31: “Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, ‘You have brought trouble on me by making me obnoxious to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed.’” (v.30) As the Life Application Bible reads, “In seeking revenge against Shechem, Simeon and Levi lied, stole, and murdered. Their desire for justice was right, but their ways of achieving it were wrong. Because of their sin, their father cursed them with his dying breath (49:5-7). Generations later, their descendants lost the part of the promised land allotted to them. When tempted to return evil for evil, leave revenge to God and spare yourself the dreadful consequences of sin.” This principle is taught throughout God's Word. Do not retaliate – let the Lord avenge an injustice. Do you understand that principle? How does it apply to you?

February 15 – Genesis 35:1 – 36:43 “Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it” (35:14) Jacob would not forget the marvelous spiritual encounter with God that he experienced at Bethel. He returns to this place and is renewed in his worship of God. The oil is a symbol of God's presence and quite expensive. He used it to show his devotion to God and how much he appreciated the Lord's help in his life. It is good to remember the times when God has helped us in a special way. Throughout the Scriptures, the prophets would remind people of how God had worked in the past. I know it is the same for your life. There are certain situations and events that have taken place to help you become the person God intended you to be. I am fanning the gratitude you might have for God and how he has blessed your life. What else did you notice in this long reading today? How might you apply these words to your life?

February 16 – Genesis 37:1-11: “Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made an ornate robe for him.” (v.3) Jacob thought he was doing the right thing for his son Joseph. He was affirming his love for his son, and the hopeful sense he had for Joseph to have a fruitful life. But favoritism is not healthy. I can honestly say that I have had no favorites among my four children. The Lord has helped me with this, and it has served my role as

father very well. There are so many problems surfacing in this dysfunctional family. But God has big plans for Joseph. It wouldn't seem so, as you will read tomorrow, but the Lord is going to use Joseph after he has been refined. What stands out to you in this short reading? How do you respond?

February 17 – Genesis 37:12-36: “Judah said to his brothers, ‘What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let's sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.’ His brothers agreed.” (v.26-27) This is the first significant reference to Judah. You know that Judah was to carry on the line to the Messiah. Judah did not want to murder. I am not saying what he suggested is that positive of a solution, but it does show a sense of guilt on the part of Judah. His conscience may respond in a stronger way in the years to come. Reuben would be responsible as the oldest. This is another experience where Jacob is deceived, even as he deceived his brother Esau as a young man. Do you notice how often the consequence of deception affects Jacob's life in a negative way? Ask God to keep you from sin, because even though God forgives freely, the consequences can have lasting results. What stands out to you in this intense reading about Joseph and being sold into slavery?

February 18 – Genesis 38:1-30: “At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah.” (v.1) Just when I was hopeful that Judah's character might be exemplary, it is far from it. The contrast is to show how Judah lived with an immoral character versus Joseph, who will show integrity, as we read tomorrow. Sexual sin seems to be addressed in such a casual manner in this chapter, when we know how devastating such relations can be. It will still take time for God to work on Judah's life, as well as Joseph's life. These two men will be key characters in the days ahead, and must be refined so that they might more clearly reflect godly character. There is much about this chapter that is confusing to me. The prevalence of prostitution is historically recorded, because prostitutes were common in pagan cultures to serve Canaanite goddesses. They were an element of religious ritual and encouraged to improve fertility in crops and flocks. How do you respond to this heavy chapter, that reveals the shocking lack of integrity in Judah's life?

February 19 – Genesis 39:1-23: “She caught him by his cloak and said, ‘Come to bed with me!’ But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.” (v.12) I referred to Joseph's strong response when confronted with the temptation of Potiphar's wife. He knew very much what was at stake, but he would not sin against God. “How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” (v.9) This is an inspiring example to us in a sexually crazed world. The pagan world of Egypt is filled with promiscuity, but Joseph would remain strong and God would help him. He is developing into a man who God can use. In verse 21 it says, “The Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.” You can be sure of the same as you live a life of integrity. Ask God to help you overcome temptation. How is God asking you to apply this chapter to your life.

Prayers: Please pray for our community outreach, as we have 10-15 children from Hallman who are participating in our After School Program, as well as our Food Bank as we minister to over 400 people by meeting their physical needs so that they might be drawn to the spiritual answer of Jesus Christ in their lives.