

## Reading Schedule for January 30 – February 5, 2017

These chapters in Genesis tell us about Isaac carrying on the hope and faith of his father. Before we finish this week, we will also read about Isaac blessing Jacob. Passing on the blessing will be a feature of these readings. I hope it helps you realize how important blessing your children really is and how God calls us to do so.

**January 30 – Genesis 24:1-33:** “I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac.” (vv. 3 & 4) Abraham realized something that I know as well, who you marry affects your life dramatically. This is a very fascinating story as the servant travels to find an appropriate wife for Isaac. I like that the servant is very concerned about God’s choice and his intervention as he sought out the right woman for his master’s son. Have you prayed for your children’s mates? Marriage is such a crucial relationship. Maybe you have children that are yet to be married, and I encourage you to pray diligently for God’s guidance so that your children will make wise choices in step with God’s desires. Possibly your children are already married; all the more reason to pray for their marriage. The Lord has such a high vision and ambition for marriage. In the New Testament we learn that it is a reflection of Christ and His church. The deeper and more loving a marriage is, the more powerful the impact. Loving, committed and joyful marriages are rare. Tense, distant and severed marriages are the norm. May God breathe life into our marriages, and may we intercede for our children and their mates, whether it pertains to future or to the present day reality. Prayer will make a big difference. What do you learn about marriage and the role of a parent in this Scripture?

**January 31 – Genesis 24:34-67:** “And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, ‘Our sister, may you increase to thousands upon thousands; may your offspring possess the cities of their enemies.’” (v.60) We will read many blessings throughout the Book of Genesis. An author named Gary Smalley wrote a book called The Blessing. A very important aspect of love for a child and the encouragement it brings is offering a blessing. This is not the only blessing Rebekah had ever received. You can sense the depth of her character and God choosing her to be a part of the line to the Messiah. No doubt God would bless her many times and she would have his protection against all of her enemies. This is the beginning of many blessings that are sure to give you ideas on how you can speak into the lives of your loved ones. The greatest aspect of the blessing is speaking a hopeful word about someone’s future. God’s heart for us is to give us a hopeful future, and you can speak that into people’s lives with confidence. Do you agree? How do you understand “the blessing?”

**February 1 – Genesis 25:1-34:** “Jacob replied, ‘First sell me your birthright.’” (v.31) You might not understand the birthright, but it was a special honor given to the firstborn son. Esau was considered the firstborn, so it was supposedly his destiny. However, the son could give it away if he chose. But in doing so, he would lose both material goods and his leadership position. By trading his birthright, Esau showed complete disregard for the spiritual blessings that would come his way if he had kept it. This is a shocking decision and shows Esau’s immaturity and lack of allegiance to God’s way. What else do you notice in this story as we are introduced to Esau and Jacob?

**February 2 – Genesis 26:1-35:** “When the men of that place asked him about his

wife, he said, ‘She is my sister,’ because he was afraid to say, ‘She is my wife.’ He thought, ‘The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.’” (v.7) I told you that Isaac would follow in his father’s footsteps. He too had a beautiful wife and he was afraid for his own safety. It is obvious that negative things can be passed as the story reveals. The Bible talks about the effect of “the sins to the third and fourth generation of those who ignore God.” I am obviously stirred up about this repetitive weakness in Isaac. I had thought about my role as a father in this regard. I have weaknesses and they will be passed on. But I also have strengths, and they can be helpful to my children. I encourage you to examine what you might be passing on. How can you help your children overcome things that you have struggled with? P.S. It’s my mother’s birthday today and she has many strengths, but one of her weaknesses is to worry. I have been vulnerable to worry, so one of my favorite verses is Philippians 4:6&7. It challenges me not to worry about anything, but in everything pray.

**February 3 – Genesis 27:1-29:** “‘Are you really my son Esau?’ he asked. ‘I am,’ he replied.” (v.24) I think that the Life Application Bible has given us a great summary of what Jacob lost by deceiving his father to get the blessing. Here are some of the consequences – He never saw his mother again; his brother wanted to kill him; he was deceived by his uncle, Laban; his family became torn by strife; Esau became the founder of an enemy nation; he is exiled from his family for years. Ironically, Jacob would have received the birthright and blessing anyway because Esau had sold the birthright to him years before. It never works when we try to make our destiny great instead of trusting God. Do you agree? How do you respond to this part of the story?

**February 4 – Genesis 27:30-46:** “Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, ‘The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’” (v.41) This specifically shows the deep animosity that would be between Esau and Jacob. He was blaming Jacob for his own immaturity. He was only looking at the situation through his own eyes. Thus he was vulnerable to jealousy and anger. He did not turn to God for help, but rather wanted to retaliate by killing his brother. These are examples of what happens when we ignore God and take things into our own hands. Do you agree? What else do you notice in the reading today?

**February 5 – Genesis 28:1-22:** “He was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.’” (v.17) The title Bethel has meant a lot to many people. It literally means the house of God. Jacob experienced the Lord at this place, and it changed his life. I have an affection for the idea of the house of God, and want our church to be just that. I pray as we gather that we experience God in a special and spiritually uplifting way. The affirmation that God gives Jacob is one that I want you to experience as we worship the Lord and lift up his name. Jacob makes a commitment to God, and God will prove to be faithful. I hope that these are days of commitment for you, where you increase your allegiance to the Lord and seek after him with all your heart. As you commit yourself to the Lord, he will be faithful to guide your steps. How does Jacob’s experience inspire you?

**Prayers: Please pray for David Neely and Meredith Mooney, who have accepted a call to serve the church in a part-time role as our Mid-High Director and our After-School Program Coordinator.**