

Reading Schedule for March 4-10, 2019

We are now leaving Abraham's story, and seeing how his offspring will do. You might know the storyline from Isaac to Jacob; they are far from perfect, but they carry on as God's chosen line for the Messiah.

March 4 – Genesis 25: “‘Look, I am about to die,’ Esau said. ‘What good is the birthright to me?’” (v.32) The comparison between Esau and Jacob is what highlights this chapter. The prophecy that the Lord shared with Rebekah, their mother, indicates the difference. It may not seem fair that God would choose the younger over the older, but when you learn about the character of the older, it makes sense. Esau was an impulsive person who lived in the moment. That's easy to see. Esau did not regard his birth right with the kind of dedication and esteem that was intended. He would not be a part of God's plan of destiny for the future Messiah. He gave up so much in the moment. It is easy to understand the lesson this portrays. How do you respond to this scenario?

March 5 – Genesis 26: “When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite.” (v.34) I will again emphasize the negative example that we see in Esau. This storyline is repeated so many times. Esau married the wrong women, and this was grievous to his parents. How many parents have come to me and felt so discouraged by the choice of their child for a mate?! What if Esau would have asked his parents for their advice? He ignored the insights and wisdom of his parents in this regard. This probably added to Rebekah's concern for her son, and her clear allegiance to Jacob. Parents are meant to be a godly resource for their children. Esau missed out and quickly married these pagan women. This is only a small portion of the story. What else stands out to you?

March 6 – Genesis 27: “You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck.” (v.40) I guess I am stuck on reflecting about the poor example of Esau. The deception of Jacob was not honorable either. But Esau had already made choices that would lead to this kind of blessing from his father. This also reminds me of the significance of a father's blessing. The Book of Genesis shows us that a blessing is meant to be passed on to the next generation. It is very significant to receive this blessing which would affirm the birthright. An author named Gary Smalley wrote a book on the topic entitled “*The Blessing*.” I think one of the strongest components of the blessing is picturing a special future. I have always tried to express to my children how confident I am in God's faithfulness and their marvelous abilities to be used in very significant ways. The Lord has been answering my prayers for my children, even as I bless them in this way. What is the meaning of the blessing in your life?

March 7 – Genesis 28: “I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (v.15) God's covenant promise to Abraham and Isaac was offered to Jacob as well. Even though Abraham was a great example of faith, Jacob had to respond in faith also. He needed to establish his own personal relationship with God. It's wonderful to have a grandfather named

Abraham, but it's not enough for one's own personal connection to God. This is still true in our lives, of course. How could Jacob resist with such a marvelous promise from God? God states that he will not abandon Jacob, but will fulfill these promises to him. That had to give Jacob a great deal of confidence. We have similar promises from God found in the new covenant through Jesus. We have been studying this in the Book of Hebrews. How do God's promises to Jacob bless you?

March 8 – Genesis 29: “So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.” (v.20) I appreciate Jacob's devotion for the woman of his dreams. This sounds rather romantic, but working hard for seven years takes a great deal of determination. This Sunday we learned about the importance of perseverance, and standing firm in our relationship with God. Perseverance, determination, and follow through are great qualities that impress me in Jacob's life. I had some reservations about Jacob, but he is turning into a very strong man of God. What stands out to you in this part of the story as Jacob remains diligent, even though he was tricked by his father-in-law?

March 9 – Genesis 30: “Then she said, ‘Here is Bilhah, my servant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and I too can build a family through her.’” (v.3) There is a similar storyline in this book regarding Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Each of their wives had difficulty conceiving children. I would think that Jacob would realize that waiting on the Lord was the best plan, instead of taking things into his own hands. I know his wife encouraged him to sleep with the maid servant, but he could have said no. The tension in Jacob's family would be real and even life-threatening because of his lack of faith to wait on God. The Lord eventually blessed Rachel with a child of her own. Isn't it amazing that God takes something that is so human, and even sinful, and turns it into the 12 tribes of Israel? I sure do appreciate the fact that God works for the good of those who love him. This gives me great confidence that the Lord will accomplish his purposes in my life, even though I have not followed him wholeheartedly at every season in my life. But I can choose today to wait on him and follow him wholeheartedly.

March 10 – Genesis 31: “So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were.” (v.4) This sets the scene in motion. Jacob explains to Rachel and Leah his reasons for returning to the homeland. He contrasts the actions of their father with the God of his father. He appreciates God's blessings and realizes that the hand of the Lord has been with him. It was not difficult for Rachel and Leah to leave their father, because he had treated them as poorly as he had treated Jacob. Jacob should have received benefits from his 14 years of hard work. When Laban did not give them what was rightfully theirs, they knew that they would never inherit anything from their father. They wholeheartedly approved of Jacob's plan to take the wealth he had gained and leave. How do you respond to this intense story? What stands out to you? What are you learning from our journey through Genesis?

PRAYER: Pray for people to respond to the good news of Jesus Christ even as we celebrate a few baptisms this coming Sunday.