



WEEK OF JANUARY 14, 2024

(COVERS READINGS FROM JANUARY 14–20)

Overview

The following information is provided as a basic orientation to reading the Bible. Feel free to add to it and use it in any way that is helpful for your group. Also, feel free to make copies of these pages for members of your group!

Genesis 27 tells of Isaac blessing his son Jacob, rather than his first-born son Esau. When Esau discovers that he has lost his blessing, he plans to kill his brother. Jacob's mother Rebekah advises him to flee. In Genesis 28, Isaac blesses and charges Jacob before he sends him away to Paddan-aram to marry. Esau hears the news and chooses a wife as well, and Jacob has a powerful dream during his travels through Bethel. When he wakes from sleeping he says, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" Genesis 32 continues the story with Jacob seeking to make amends with Esau by sending presents to his brother through messengers. As Jacob travels with his family, he meets a man at Peniel and wrestles with him all through the night until daybreak. He is given the new name of Israel, and he is left with a limp due to a hip injury. Jacob and Esau are reunited in Genesis 33—a reunion marked by running to meet each other, embracing, kissing, and weeping.

Genesis 37 introduces Jacob's son Joseph and tells of his dreams of greatness. When Joseph recounts his dreams to his brothers, they throw him in a pit and sell him to Midianite traders for 20 pieces of silver. Joseph is taken to Egypt.

Genesis 39 tells of the favor Joseph finds with Potiphar (an officer of Pharaoh) and he is made overseer of the officer's house. However, when Potiphar's wife seeks to seduce Joseph and he refuses, the wife wrongfully accuses him and Joseph is put in jail. In Genesis 40, Joseph discovers his ability to interpret dreams of those in jail, including the chief cupbearer and chief baker. Joseph's interpretations come true. Genesis 41 shows Joseph's interpretive work with Pharaoh's dreams which brings Joseph political power.

In Genesis 42 and 43, Joseph's brothers make two trips to Egypt to buy food during the famine. Genesis 44 tells of Joseph detaining his brother Benjamin, and Judah pleads for Benjamin on behalf of their father Jacob.

In Genesis 45 Joseph reveals his identity as their brother and immediately tells them not to grow angry but to receive his help. Genesis 46 shows Joseph bringing his entire family to Egypt and Jacob settles in Goshen.

Exodus 1 sets the stage for the story of the oppressed Israelites. Pharaoh commands, "Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live." Moses is born in Exodus 2—

he is put into a basket in the Nile so that the daughter of Pharaoh will find him. She calls him Moses because she drew him out of the water and raises him. When he is older, Moses sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew; he kills the Egyptian and runs.

Exodus 3 tells of Moses' encounter with God in the burning bush. Exodus 4 continues Moses' conversation with God—God sends Moses and Aaron back to Egypt to deliver the Israelites out of slavery.

General Discussion Questions

Use any or all of the following questions, depending how much time you have:

- How familiar were you with this week's readings? Was there anything that surprised you?
- What do you learn about God from these readings? What do you learn about humanity, or about human nature? How did the authors of these writings understand their relationship with God?
- What passages or aspects of these readings give you comfort or assurance? What passages or aspects of these readings do you find difficult to accept?
- Are there any particular passages that you want to study in-depth?

This Week's Discussion Questions

Genesis 33 | After years of running from one another post family blessing debacle, Jacob and Esau share a moving reunion—one of embrace, shared tears, and words of forgiveness and reconciliation. Jacob says to his brother, "If I find favor with you, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God." What feelings do Jacob's words stir up within you as you think about forgiveness? What could Jacob have meant in comparing seeing his brother's face to seeing the face of God?

Exodus 3-4:17 | When Moses saw the burning bush, he "turned aside" so he could see more clearly. What if Moses had not turned aside to look at the bush? Could he have ignored it really—ignored God? Can you think of a time when you have chosen to turn aside and see—or chosen *not* to turn aside and see?

Closing Prayer

God of forgiveness and freedom,

Thank you so much for the gift of reconciliation with you and with one another. May you continue to draw us ever near that we may learn to see your face in others. May you empower us to have the courage to turn again to see the burning bush. In Jesus' name, Amen.