

Monday

Genesis 21:1–21

Many years had passed after God first gave his promise that Abraham and Sarah would have a child. They had to wait a long, long time.

But, one day, God's promise finally came true. When Abraham was 100 years old, God gave Abraham and Sarah a baby boy. Abraham named his son "Isaac" – which means "laughter." Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me," because everyone who heard that she'd had a baby laughed about it.

When Isaac had grown a bit, Abraham gave a big feast for him. Hagar, Sarah's maid, and Hagar's son Ishmael lived with Abraham and Sarah. Ishmael was the son of Hagar and Abraham. On the day of the feast for Isaac, Sarah saw Ishmael laughing at Isaac. Sarah became very upset and told Abraham to send Ishmael and Hagar away for good. She did not want Ishmael to share in Abraham's inheritance – what he would pass on to Isaac when he died.

Abraham did not know what to do. God told Abraham not to be sad, but to do as Sarah had asked. God said his promises to Abraham and his covenant would be passed on through Isaac, not Ishmael. God also promised Abraham that Ishmael would one day have a great family, too. So Hagar and Ishmael went away to live somewhere else, and God provided what they needed.

Isaac was the child God had promised. Abraham and Sarah had believed that God would keep his promises and give them this child. God's covenant with Abraham was passed on to Isaac. God's covenant today is with all who believe his promises and trust in his only Son that he promised and gave, Jesus our Savior.

- **What does Isaac's name mean, and why is that a good name for him?**
- **When Hagar and Ishmael were sent away, what did God do for them?**
- **What promise has God made to us that we, like Abraham, must trust?**

Close with prayer

SEPTEMBER WEEK FOUR: ISAAC AND REBEKAH

Tuesday

Judges 6:1–8:21

Isaac grew up and Abraham became very old. Abraham knew that the time had come for Isaac to find a wife. So Abraham told his servant Eliezer to travel far away to the land where Abraham's family lived and to find a wife for Isaac from among the people who lived there and who feared God.

The servant Eliezer left with 10 of Abraham's camels loaded with gifts from Abraham. When Eliezer arrived at the city where Abraham's relatives lived, he went to the well with all the camels. It was the time of day when the young women of the community would come out with their water jars to get water for their households. Eliezer prayed that God would show him the exact woman to be Isaac's wife – the woman would give a drink to Eliezer.

Before Eliezer had said "Amen," a beautiful young woman named Rebekah came to the well. Eliezer asked her for a drink from her pitcher of water, and immediately Rebekah gave him a drink. Then she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." And she drew enough water from the well for all those thirsty camels!

Eliezer gave Rebekah a gold ring and two gold bracelets. "Please tell me whose daughter you are," he asked. "Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

There was more than enough room for Eliezer and all his camels. And when Eliezer found out that Rebekah's father was Abraham's relative, Eliezer got excited and exclaimed, "Blessed be the God of my master Abraham!"

Just then, Rebekah's brother Laban ran out to the well to meet Eliezer. Laban brought Eliezer to their home and helped unload and feed the camels.

When it was time for dinner, Eliezer said he would not eat until he had told them why he had come. When Abraham's servant told them his story, Rebekah's family saw that God had caused all this to happen. When Eliezer heard their words, he bowed down and worshiped God. When they asked Rebekah if she wanted to go with Eliezer to marry Isaac, Rebekah answered, "I will go." In the morning they set off. When Isaac met Rebekah, he loved her and took her as his wife.

God continued to keep his promises through this family. Then one day, when it was God's right time, he sent Jesus to suffer and die for the sin of the world and to rise triumphantly from the grave. This was all a part of God's plan to give you a Savior.

- What did God do when Eliezer came to the well and prayed to God?

Close with prayer

SEPTEMBER WEEK FOUR: JACOB'S DREAM

Wednesday

Genesis 27:41–28:22

When Isaac was old, he blessed both of his sons. Jacob stole the better blessing from Esau. This made Esau very angry. He said, "I will kill my brother Jacob."

Rebekah found out how angry Esau was. She told Jacob he must leave home for a while so Esau wouldn't hurt him. She told Jacob to go quickly to the home of her brother Laban and stay there until Esau was no longer angry.

Soon Jacob was on his way. When night came, there was no house nearby, so Jacob lay down on the ground to sleep. He put a rock under his head for a pillow.

During the night, Jacob had a dream. In his dream he saw a ladder or a stairway going up to heaven. The bottom step was on the ground, and the top step reached all the way up to heaven. Angels walked up and down the steps, and God was at the very top.

God spoke to Jacob in the dream. "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of your father Isaac," he said. God promised to give the land where he was sleeping to Jacob, and to the children he would have. God promised that there would be so many children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren from Jacob that they would be like the dust that covers the ground. Best of all, God promised Jacob that the Savior would come from his family. And God said, "I am with you and will keep you wherever you go."

Jacob woke up and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

Early in the morning, Jacob took the rock he had used as a pillow and set it up as a pillar to show that something very special had happened there. He poured oil on it. He named the place Bethel, which means "house of God."

In Jacob's dream, he saw a ladder or a stairway going from heaven to earth. Many years later the Savior would be born from Jacob's family line. This Savior is God's very own Son – the one and only way to heaven. Jesus referred to himself as that ladder or stairway to heaven when he said, "You will see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' [me]" (John 1:51). Jesus suffered and died for our sins. And he rose victorious on Easter morning. Because of Jesus' work, through faith in him, God grants his children a rich inheritance and the blessings of his victory – the forgiveness of sins and life forever with him.

- **How is the way to heaven revealed to us today?**

Close with prayer



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SEPTEMBER WEEK FOUR: JACOB'S FAMILY

Thursday

Genesis 29:1–30:24

Jacob had traveled far from home to escape his angry twin brother, Esau. He was on his way to Haran to stay with his Uncle Laban. As he was traveling to the land in the east, he saw a well and shepherds tending sheep. Jacob said to the shepherds, "My brothers, where do you come from?"

The shepherds were from Haran – the very place where Jacob was going. He asked them if they knew Laban.

The shepherds did know who Laban was. In fact, they said, "See, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep." When Rachel arrived, Jacob was very glad to meet her. He kissed her and cried. Now he was no longer alone. He had found his uncle's family. Rachel was happy, too. She ran to tell her father about Jacob. Uncle Laban came quickly and took Jacob to his house. Laban and his family were happy to have Jacob stay and work with them.

One day, Laban told Jacob that it was not right that Jacob should work for nothing. Laban asked Jacob what he would like to have for his work. Jacob told Laban that he would work for seven years if, at that end of the seven years, he could marry Rachel. Laban agreed. So Jacob worked seven years, but the time went by quickly for Jacob because he loved Rachel so much.

But Laban was tricky. Rachel had an older sister named Leah, who was not yet married, and Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah first.

At a wedding, the bride wore a veil that covered her face so no one could see her face. Laban tricked Jacob by bringing Leah to the wedding instead of Rachel. Because Leah was covered with the wedding veil, Jacob could not see her face. He married Leah, thinking he was marrying Rachel!

Of course, Jacob was very angry when he discovered the trick. Laban told him that the older sister must get married before the younger sister. Now that the older sister was married, Laban told Jacob he could marry Rachel too, as long as he would stay and work for Laban for seven more years. Jacob agreed. He stayed married to Leah, and he also married Rachel the next week. After that, he worked for Laban for seven more years.

God blessed Leah with children. For a long time, Rachel had no children and was jealous of her sister. Finally, after Jacob had 10 sons, God gave Rachel a baby of her own. The baby's name was Joseph.

God is good. Even though Jacob misused marriage, and even though his wives and relatives lied to one another, tricked each other, and were jealous of one another, God still blessed Jacob with a very large family.

God had plans for Jacob's family. Through them, God was keeping his promise to send a Savior. Our Savior, Jesus, came from the family line of Judah, one of Jacob's and Leah's sons. Through Jacob's family, all families are blessed, even yours, because through their family came Jesus, who blesses us all.

- **What was the trick that Laban did to Jacob?**
- **God was gracious to Jacob, even though he didn't deserve God's blessing. Is God good to us, too, even though we don't deserve his blessing? Can you think of some ways that God is undeservingly good to you?**

Close with prayer

SEPTEMBER WEEK FOUR: GOD'S ONE FAMILY

Friday

Acts 15:1–16:5

Jesus was descended from the family line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their descendants were called Jews. God chose their family to eventually be the family of the promised Savior. God protected and blessed that family. They became so numerous that they were recognized as their own nation. The Jews were the people of the nation of Israel. Jesus came from that family. He came to be the Savior of all people, not just the Savior of the Jews.

The Bible tells us about a boy named Timothy, whose father was not a Jew. His father was a Greek and did not worship the one true God. When Timothy was a boy, his Jewish mother and grandmother taught him about God from the Scriptures. They told him about God's promise to send a Savior. So when their family learned about Jesus – that he was the promised Savior – they were quick to believe in him. They joined the Christian believers who had planted churches in the cities of Lystra and Iconium.

The Apostle Paul was the missionary who helped them start those churches. When Paul came back to visit the followers of Jesus at Lystra, he heard good things about Timothy from the people in the church where Timothy worshipped the Lord. So Paul asked Timothy to travel with him on his missionary journey.

There were two main purposes for Paul's missionary journey. The first was to spread the good news about Jesus. Paul's second purpose was to encourage and teach all the small groups of new Christian believers who had planted churches.

Some people needed help understanding some things. There were people who had been arguing about things they thought everyone had to do in order to be a true believer in Jesus. Some thought everyone had to eat special food or do special things to keep certain rules in order to become a true follower of Jesus and to be a member of his church. Some thought that only Jews could be believers in Jesus. But God had taught Paul that there isn't anything we can do to make ourselves good enough to deserve God's love. Paul tried to keep all the rules and Jewish laws – but he had failed. He knew that he was still an unworthy sinner, just like all of us. That is why God sent Jesus to save us from our sin.

Paul wanted everyone to know that God forgives all our sins because of our faith in Jesus. We don't have to do anything. Jesus did it all for us. Jesus kept God's rules perfectly, and then he died on the cross for our sins, to pay for the punishment that we deserved.

No one needs to do anything extra to earn God's love and forgiveness. Jesus has already done it all for us. We only need to trust in him. – That's what Paul and Timothy told people as they traveled on their missionary journey together. Timothy went many places with Paul. Everywhere they went, they told people that Jesus came to save them from their sin and that they did not need to do special things, but just trust in Jesus as their Savior. The Holy Spirit

helped the people in the churches grow stronger in their faith. Many more people, both Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews), believed in Jesus as their Savior. They all became part of God's one family, the Church.

- **Who taught Timothy about the one true God?**
- **What does anyone have to do to become a part of God's family, the Church?**

Close with prayer