

Read 42: 1-20

- ◆ What was Joseph's intention by concealing his identity?

Compare 15: 12-16 with 46: 1-4. What can we see confirmed here?

So we end this study with Jacob's family and entourage living in Egypt as welcome guests.

We have become aware of God's remarkable care for his people and how he works out his plan through human history. See Hebrews 11: 8-12

Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father". The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are co-heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory". Romans 8: 14-17

Prayer

Holy and eternal God, give us such trust in your sure purpose, that we measure our lives not by what we have done or failed to do, but by our faithfulness to you. (Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand).

Thought to carry into the week ahead:-

Humanity (that's you and me) is made in God's image. God's character displays faithfulness and trustworthiness to all. How much of a challenge is this to us in our day to day relationships with family, friends and the not-so-friendly?

God's one big plan

Founding Fathers—unit 2

In this study session (unit 2) we will be considering 'Founding Fathers'. Just take a few minutes to think through and discuss what we learn from our parents. Make some comparisons between the scenarios of current parenting and those of ancient times such as Abraham's time. How was it different? Was it better then or now?

In this series of studies 'God's one big plan' we are inevitably looking at the big picture and not drilling down to the individual often familiar stories. This study session covers Genesis 12 through 50 – Abraham/ Isaac/Jacob/Joseph - standing back as it were to view and pick out what we can learn from what God is teaching his people (and therefore us) by the overall 'direction of travel'.

Call of Abram (Genesis 12: 1 – 3)

- ◆ Prior to God speaking to Abram, did he and his family worship God or any gods? (check out Genesis 10 – 11)

Notice that no reason is given for the choice of Abram. He does not appear to have been anyone special, and we subsequently learn that he was given to lying and compromise, doubt and fear, although strong in faith.

- ◆ What are the main points to be drawn from this passage? (One command and three promises).

These promises are repeated (with slight variations) several times - see 13: 14-17, 17: 1-8, 22: 15-18

Chapter 15 & 16

Note in verse 1 how God describes himself. We are reminded that Abram remains childless and the question remains 'How is God going to give Abram a son when all the odds are against him' (was age 75 when he left Haran).

Read 16:1-4^a

- ◆ Although what we read here was both legal and common at that time, what does it say about giving God a helping hand?

Note God's care for Hagar and Ishmael through this incident (16: 7-15) (also 17: 20-21). (Ishmael is traditionally regarded as the father of the Arabs, and so revered by Muslims.)

Read chapter 17

Note name change Abram to Abraham. God confirms his covenant is with Abraham and his descendants. The sign of the covenant is circumcision.

- ◆ This concept of changing a name when an important role is confirmed is used elsewhere (outside of the bible). Can you give an example?

Read chapter 22 - The severe testing of Abraham.

- ◆ Do you think testing remains today part of ongoing journey of faith?
- ◆ Is there anyone in your group who, with the benefit of hindsight, would like to reflect upon the effect on their faith of being tested?

Abraham's son Isaac receives little coverage within the Bible compared with Jacob his son.

Abraham dies age 175; he has an heir but the only part of the promised land he has is his small burial plot (see Chapter 23 & 25: 9-11).

It will be approximately 500 years before Joshua leads Abraham's descendants (nation Israel) to possess the promised land.

- ◆ Is there anything to learn about God from this?

Too much to read completely, but have a quick skim read of chapters 25 to 35 (use the section headings), stories that are well known to most. Jacob proves to be clever but deceitful. Chapters 29-31 Jacob meets his match in his uncle Laban and Jacob the deceiver is deceived. (see 29: 15-27).

Read 32: 22-32

This mysterious struggle breaks the lifetime of self-reliance by Jacob as he wrestles with God. He receives a new name Israel (which is normally used for the nation of God's people after the Sinai wilderness experience).

- ◆ For many of us it was difficult (and for some remains difficult) to 'let go' and 'let God'. Is there a connection here with study one (Creation and Fall)?

But from Jacob and his two wives come twelve sons; these are to be the 12 tribes of Israel upon which the nation will be built.

The Genesis account now focuses upon Joseph. He is one of the few characters in the bible who has few flaws (once through his teenage years!). See 39: 2 & 21 for a clue.