

The Easy Bible® Volume Three

Days 63-93

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Much appreciation ...

Thanks to the people of A Pathway Home for their participation and sustained enthusiasm for **The Easy Bible**[®]. Thanks to Bill & Tina Irwin and Richard Polcyn for reviewing this manuscript and making helpful suggestions and corrections. And thanks to Kim Clough for never wavering.

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Finding your way around / Volume 3 in a regular Bible

Volume 3 contains excerpts from the following books of the Bible in bold type:

Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther **Job**
Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi Matthew Mark Luke John Acts Romans 1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Ephesians Philippians Colossians 1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 1 Timothy 2 Timothy Titus Philemon Hebrews James 1 Peter 2 Peter 1 John 2 John 3 John Jude Revelation

The Easy Bible® was created to make it easy and fun for you to explore the Christian faith. We know the Bible can be confusing if you don't know your way around. So consider this your guided tour, your bridge from no Bible to whole Bible. We took all the "read-me-first" passages from the Bible and arranged them into 365 daily readings. We put these Bible passages into easy-to-understand, user-friendly language. We added notes to help you understand each day's selection. We added a section named *Discoveries* to help you with your spiritual journey. Finally, we include a set of questions. Beside each question is this box: □. If you plan to meet with friends to discuss what you have been reading, checked boxes will remind you which questions you wish to discuss.

"A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education."

Theodore Roosevelt

The Easy Bible® symbols

◀B ▶ **Matthew 6:10-13** → Find it here: ◀77% ▶ **Malachi Matthew Mark**

◀B ▶ This introduces a Bible passage.

Matthew 6:10-13 This gives the reference or "address" of the passage. This passage is in the sixth chapter of the book of Matthew, verses 10 through 13.

→ Find it here: ◀77% ▶ **Malachi Matthew Mark**

Our version of the Bible is arranged in a different order than other versions. This symbol shows you how to find each passage in a regular Bible. For example, 77 percent puts this passage about 3/4 of the way through the Bible; 50 percent would be in the middle; 0 percent would be in the first few pages; and 100 percent would be in the last few pages. The words after the symbol will help you find it from nearby books of the Bible. If you have access to a regular Bible, you might try seeing if you can find the passage given these hints. Remember, different translations will read a little differently.

▶ Notes to help you understand the Bible passage

‡ *Discoveries*: Help for your spiritual journey

?? Questions for you to ponder and discuss

Are you a Bible pro?

The Easy Bible[®] is your tool to help your friends move from no Bible to whole Bible. It isn't a scholarly translation; throw that idea out the window right now. It isn't pretending to be. It's a conversation starter. It's a place to begin. It's a way to get traction on the uphill trek of faith. **So give these books to your friends who are new to the Bible.** Read each day yourself and fill in the answers to the questions. Then get together with your friends over pizza and pop, wine and cheese, beer and pretzels, coffee and donuts (or however you like to do it), and chew on this together.

For example, I was sharing a question from Day 1 with a young friend. I asked, "What does faith mean to you? How would you describe your faith (or lack of faith) in God?" His response: "I trust God, I mean, a little. I don't trust anybody completely." *What a great window into this young man's life!* So I followed up with the question, "What would need to happen for you to move from trusting God a little to trusting God completely?" He said, "Well, God would need to do something about all the suffering in the world." This led to a great conversation about God, suffering, faith and opportunity. This is how the process of exploring and embracing the Christian faith takes place. During our conversation, we read the *Discoveries* entry for Day 1. It spoke to this young man's question and was helpful in cementing some of the concepts I sought to communicate. By the way, we also tested the *Discoveries* section of this book on Bible veterans with 30, 40, 50 years of experience, and they were blown away. So there might be something in here for you, too.

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Day 63: The First Murder

► In *Volumes One* and *Two* of **The Easy Bible®** we looked at the life of Jesus ending with His resurrection from the dead and His instructions to His followers. We'll learn more about what happened to those followers in subsequent volumes, and we'll look closely at the instructions and encouragement they left for us today. But here in *Volume Three* we're going to start filling in the back story and looking at the events that led up to the birth and life of Jesus. As you'll recall from *Volume One*, we looked at Creation (Day 5) and the first humans, Adam and Eve (Day 6). We looked at how they lost their place of innocence before God, and how they opened the door for the mess we find ourselves in today (Day 7). We pick up their story today as we look at their family, its dysfunction and the tragedy that came into that first home.

◀B ▶ **Genesis 4:1-26** → Find it here: ◀0% ▶ **Genesis Exodus Leviticus**

Adam and Eve had children in the normal way. When Cain was born, Eve said, "With God's help, I've produced a man." Later another son was born, Abel. Abel was a sheep farmer; Cain grew vegetables. In time, they both brought a gift or offering to God. Cain brought vegetables. Abel sacrificed a choice first-born lamb. God approved of Abel and his offering, but He disapproved of Cain and rejected his gift. This made Cain furious, but God said, "Why are you so angry? Why this nasty mood? You have the same opportunity to please Me that Abel has. Do what's right and you too will be accepted. But if you refuse, sin wants to ambush you and take over your life. You need to take charge of these evil desires."

At Cain's invitation, Abel went with him into the field. While they were there, Cain turned on Abel and murdered him. Then God said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain said, "Why are you asking me? Does it look like I'm in charge of him?" God said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground. From now on you will be under a curse. The earth that swallowed your brother's blood will no longer yield crops for you. You will be homeless, a tramp wandering the earth." Cain said to God, "My punishment is more than I can take. You've evicted me from my farm, driven me from Your presence, made me homeless and a target for everyone. Whoever finds me will kill me." God said, "No. Anyone who kills you will suffer for it seven times over." So God put a mark on Cain to protect him so no one would kill him.

Cain left God's presence and moved to Nod, a land east of Eden. Cain and his wife had a son named Enoch. Cain built a city and named it after his son. Enoch was the father of Irad. The generations that followed were Irad, Mehujael, Methushael, Lamech. Lamech married two women, Adah and Zillah. Adah was the mother of Jabal, the one who popularized living in tents and raising livestock. His brother, Jubal, was a musician. Zillah's son was Tubal-Cain, a blacksmith. Tubal-Cain's sister was Naamah. Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, pay attention. Wives of Lamech, hear what I say. I killed a man for wounding me, a young man who came after me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech will be avenged seventy-seven times."

Meanwhile, Adam and Eve had another son, named Seth. Eve said, "God has given me another child in the place of Abel because Cain killed him." Seth had a son named Enosh. At that time, people first started to worship God by name.

► **God approved of Abel ... but ... disapproved of Cain ...** Keep in mind that God sees what we cannot see. (See 1 Samuel 16:7.) Cain's subsequent behavior revealed what was in his heart all along: hatred, envy, murder, arrogance, refusal to take responsibility for his actions. Abel's offering represented the sacrificial death of the coming Messiah; it may be that both Cain and Abel were aware that a blood sacrifice was needed to show the gravity of sin, but only Abel took that requirement seriously. See also Jude 11. ► **Sin** means to fall short of God's standard. See note on Evil [Day 6], Salvation/sin [Day 11]. ► **Does it look like I'm in charge of him?** Or, *Am I my brother's keeper?* ► **Cain's wife** Obviously Cain and his brothers needed to marry their sisters or nieces or some other close relative. ► **Enoch, Lamech** Not to be confused with others of the same name who will be introduced tomorrow. ► **worship God by name** Or, *call on the name of the Lord*. It could be that God's name (I AM WHO I AM, also translated Yahweh or Jehovah or the LORD) was first revealed at this time, although it may have been revealed earlier or later. (See Genesis 4:1 and Exodus 3:13-14.) Or it could mean that people began invoking their relationship with God to give authority to their prayers. Or it could mean that people began to put together a clear theology of who God is and what He expected.

‡ Discoveries: A Voice from the Earth

"The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground." / Genesis 4:10 [Day 63]

God is the One who listens to the cries of those who have been silenced.

I am at times angered, horrified, discouraged or numb over the suffering of my brothers and sisters, young and old, all over the world, in the more than fifty countries where it is illegal and / or dangerous to be a Christian. But I keep coming back to God, and here, at the beginning, He declares Himself. Every drop of blood cries out, and God hears those cries.

The world, in its hatred of God, tries in every way to silence the voices of His children. But those voices will be heard, and their cries will never be forgotten.

?? What character qualities do you observe in Cain? Why do you think God rejected his gift? □ (check the questions you wish to discuss later)

Every family experiences a certain amount of dysfunction, and sibling rivalry is felt in nearly every home. In what ways do you work to keep your family whole and your closest relationships healthy? □

Why do you think God put a mark on Cain? □

What do you think changed when people first began to worship God by name? How can you worship God by name? □

Your main take away from today's reading ... □

Day 64: Our Family Tree

◀B ▶ Genesis 5:1-32, 9:29 → Find it here: ◀0% ▶ Genesis Exodus Leviticus

Here's a chart of the family tree of humanity, the creatures God made and modeled after Himself.

Father	Age when son was born	Son(s)	Years lived after son was born	Total life span
Adam	130	Seth	800	930
Seth	105	Enosh	807	912
Enosh	90	Kenan	815	905
Kenan	70	Mahalalel	840	910
Mahalalel	65	Jared	830	895
Jared	162	Enoch	800	962
Enoch	65	Methuselah	300	365

After Methuselah was born, Enoch walked with God. For three hundred years Enoch walked with God. One day he vanished. He walked home with God.

Methuselah	187	Lamech	782	969
Lamech	182	Noah	595	777

When Noah was born, Lamech said, "Here's the relief we've been waiting for; God will allow us to rest from our back-breaking work caused by the ground God cursed."

Noah	500	Shem, Ham, Japheth	450	950
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▶ **Family tree** Some interpret this passage as meaning that there could be several generations between each of the names listed here; others say that no generations were skipped in this list. ▶ **Lifespans** The four longest earthly lifespans recorded in the Bible are in this list: Methuselah at 969, Jared at 962, Noah at 950 and Adam at 930. Among those who take the Bible at face value,

several explanations have been offered as to these extended life spans. Some say the gene pool was stronger prior to Noah's flood and closer to Creation. Humans were originally created to live forever, they say, so 900 years is no big stretch. Others speculate that, prior to the Flood, there was a protective canopy surrounding the earth, keeping out life-shortening radiation. Others point to the vegan diet that existed prior to the Flood. In any case, if people were regularly living several hundred years and capable of having children for much of that time, then it's easy to see how population and technology could explode over the course of a couple thousand years. Each person lived long enough to become an expert in many different disciplines. ► **Other children** The passage also indicates that each of the men listed here (with the possible exception of Noah) had other sons and daughters. ► **Enoch** Not to be confused with Cain's son, in Genesis 4 (Day 63). We are told very little about Enoch in the Bible. He is commended for his faith in Hebrews 11:5 and quoted for his prophecy about the return of Jesus in Jude 14-15. ► **Methuselah** Methuselah's name means "after him it will come." Noah's flood arrived the year Methuselah died.

⚡ Discoveries: Let's Take a Walk

After Methuselah was born, Enoch walked with God. For three hundred years Enoch walked with God. One day he vanished. He walked home with God. / Genesis 5:22-24 [Day 64]

I've often wondered about the time from Adam to Noah. What was life like? Think about it. In our world, it takes 1-15 years to become proficient at a profession. To take out 15 years, for example, to become a neurosurgeon, you are committed to that path probably for life. But if you live to be 800 years old, you could learn to be a surgeon, a plumber, an attorney, a writer, an architect—whatever—you could be all of those things. And if childbearing years stretched into the centuries, a couple might have over a hundred children. You can see why it says that people built cities. They needed cities to contain the tens of thousands of descendants they would see during their own lifetime. We think of this time as being primitive, but we don't know that. It may very well have been more advanced in many technologies than we are now.

In the middle of these centuries, a pivotal figure emerges—Enoch, the seventh from Adam. He may have had a hundred children. He may have been a surgeon, an attorney, a prophet, an architect—and who knows what all else rolled up into one. But one thing mattered above everything else: He walked with God.

This is one thing I appreciate about our Father in heaven. There are many things that may be beyond the reach of most of us. But God makes the thing that matters most easy to find. He put it on the lower shelf so all of us can reach it. He opens the door, holds out His hand, and says, "Let's take a walk."

?? The Bible contains several genealogies. While Western readers tend to skip over them, they were important to the writers of the Bible. Why do you think that is? What importance do they hold to you? □

What do you imagine it might be like to live 900 years and see thousands of your own descendants? □

What does it mean to "walk with God"? How could walking with God become part of your life? □

Lamech was looking for relief from the difficulties humanity was facing. What comfort or relief have you found in God, and how can you bring it to your world? □

Your main take away from today's reading ... □

Day 65: Noah's Flood

◀B ▶ Genesis 6:1-9:29 (selected portions), Psalm 104:8

→ Find it here: ◀0% ▶ Genesis Exodus Leviticus ◀51% ▶ Job Psalms Proverbs

As the population grew, the godly descendants of Adam became corrupted when they intermarried with beautiful women who did not share their faith in God. This tried God's patience. God said, "I'm cutting the human life span down to 120 years." As time went on, corruption and evil mushroomed until it was off the charts. Almost every thought of almost every human was evil, and violence was everywhere. As God looked around at this, His heart was filled with pain. Creation was a disaster. So He said, "Time to start over. I'm going to wipe out humans and animals alike."

But Noah stood out. When God looked at Noah's life, He smiled. Noah was a good man, recognized as a man of integrity. God said to Noah, "I'm not going to allow this violence and evil to continue. I am bringing humanity to an end, except for you and your family. Here's what I want you to do. Build a ship out of cypress wood. Seal it with pitch. Build it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Put a roof on it and a window close to the top. Put a door on the side, and build three decks. A flood is coming; all life will perish. But you and I will have an agreement because you stand out in this generation as a man of integrity. You and your wife, your sons and their wives will ride out the Flood in the ship. You will also bring in pairs of each kind of animal, male and female along with food for the animals and your family. In the case of 'clean' animals, bring seven pairs on board."

Noah followed these instructions. The day came for him and his family to enter the ship with the animals inside. God shut the door. Then it started raining, and it rained 40 days and nights straight. Underground springs broke open. The ship floated, and the water level rose until all the mountains were covered to a depth of 20 feet. Noah was 600 years, two months and 17 days old when the Flood came. That was the end. Every human and every animal died except for those on the ship. The Flood covered the earth 150 days.

Then God, focusing His attention on Noah and those with him on the ship, brought the Flood to an end. The rain stopped. The underground springs were closed. Mountains rose, valleys sank. A wind blew, and the Flood began to recede. Meanwhile, the ship came to rest in the mountains of Ararat. After 40 days, Noah opened the window and released a raven, and it flew back and forth

until the water dried up. Then he released a dove, but the dove, finding no place to land, returned. A week later, he released the dove, and it returned with a freshly picked olive branch. A week later, he released the dove, but it didn't return. On Noah's 601st birthday, he opened the door of the ship. A month and 27 days later, the Flood had completely receded, and the drying process was complete. Then, at God's instruction, Noah, his family and all the animals left the ship to once again repopulate the earth.

Noah built an altar and offered a burnt sacrifice from among each of the "clean" animals to honor God. Smelling this aroma of honor, God said to Himself, "The curse on the ground is lifted. Even though humans gravitate toward evil from the time they are children, I will never again destroy all life as I have done. Instead, as long as earth lasts, there will be times of planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night." God said to Noah and his sons, "Repopulate the earth. I will put a fear of humans into the animals, and they will be food for you just as I have given you plants as food. But be sure to drain out the blood—the life of the animal—before you consume the meat. Now, if the blood of humans is spilled by violence from another human or an animal, I will hold the killer responsible, and I will avenge the life that was taken. Whoever kills another human will be killed by a human, because humans were modeled after God. I'm making a solemn agreement with you and your descendants. Never again will a flood wipe out all life on earth. Here's My sign to you that I am remembering that promise: every time you see a rainbow, you can be sure that I remember this promise."

Noah's sons were Shem, Ham and Japheth. From these three the whole earth was repopulated. Noah started farming, growing grapes in a vineyard. From the grapes he made wine, drank it, got drunk, and fell asleep naked inside his tent. Ham, who had a son named Canaan, saw his father without any clothes on and told his brothers. Shem and Japheth took a coat, walked in backwards so they wouldn't see anything, and draped the coat over their father, Noah. When Noah woke up and learned what Ham had done, he said, "A curse be on Canaan, son of Ham. Let his descendants be the lowest of slaves. The God of Shem is good; and Japheth will prosper, but Canaan will be the slave of Shem." Noah lived 350 years after the Flood and died at 950 years.

► **corrupted when they intermarried** A more literal translation would be, "The sons of God were attracted to the daughters of men and married any of them they wanted to marry." Some have understood this to mean that angels somehow intermarried with humans, but this seems inconsistent with Jesus'

statement that in the Resurrection we will be like angels, who do not marry. See Luke 20:34-36 [Day 45] Most understand this to mean that the godly descendants of Seth were intermarrying with the corrupt descendants of Cain. ► **ship** often translated “ark.” ► **“Clean” animals** were considered appropriate for sacrifice and later for eating. ► **Mountains rose, valleys sank.** This is a reference from Psalm 104:8. ► **mountains of Ararat** This is a mountainous region in Turkey where some have reported finding a ship-like structure buried in a glacier. ► **Burnt sacrifice** The animal was slaughtered and then laid on top of a wood pile set on fire, where it was burned to ash. ► **a curse be on Canaan** Some have used this passage as a justification for racism against persons of African descent; however, the curse is on Canaan, not on Ham, nor is it clear that Ham was the ancestor of all people of color. Canaan was not the ancestor of dark-skinned persons; rather, he was the ancestor of the people groups who settled in the land that was eventually occupied by Israel. The curse on Canaan didn’t preclude any individual Canaanite from experiencing God’s favor and prosperity; more than one person of Canaanite descent receives honorable mention in the Bible. (Genesis 14:18, 2 Samuel 11, Matthew 15:21-28, etc.)

⚡ Discoveries: In the Same Boat

Meanwhile, the ship came to rest in the mountains of Ararat. / Genesis 8:4 [Day 65]

It’s easy to forget that what is now history was once experience. We have no record of Noah being informed how he would get out of the ship, of how God would keep the timbers together no matter how high the waves got to be, of how God would prevent the hull from being torn apart by some rock formation, of how the door that was shut would open again.

Many of us find ourselves in the same “boat.” We don’t know how we are going to get out, we just know that God is responsible for our deliverance.

If you are looking around, like I sometimes do, saying, “This is impossible!” then I have good news for both of us. God has it all figured out. Someday we will be able to look at a calendar, point to the date, and say, “On this day, my problem came to rest. This was the day of my deliverance.”

?? In this passage we get an intimate look at God: “His heart was filled with pain.” It seemed like everything He had hoped for had gone wrong. Creation was a disaster. Have you experienced times in your life when you had high hopes but everything went wrong? How did you navigate through those times?

□

When God looked at Noah’s life, He smiled. What caused Noah to stand out in his generation? Is it possible for you to stand out in your generation? Explain. □

Noah’s flood creates a number of scientific questions that are not easy to answer. How do you deal with those questions? □

Noah offered burnt sacrifices as a way of honoring God. How can you honor God in the context of your world? □

Your main take away from today’s reading ... □

Day 66: Starting Over

► Just as Adam and Eve originally populated the earth, now the three sons of Noah (Shem, Ham, Japheth) together with their wives repopulated the earth. Genesis 10 identifies which nations and people groups were descended from which son of Noah. The identity of some—but not all—of these people groups is clear.

- **Shem's** descendants include the people of Israel as well as some of the Arab peoples. Ancient Assyria was descended from Shem. The godly man Job was probably descended from Shem as were his fellow countrymen of Uz.
- **Ham** was the ancestor of the Egyptians, Libyans, Ethiopians, Iraqis, and possibly the Chinese. Ham was also the ancestor of the people groups who, during Biblical times, were most hostile to the nation of Israel, including the Philistines and the Canaanites.
- **Japheth** was the ancestor of many European races, the Russians, and perhaps the Indians of India.

God's original plan was for these people groups to disperse among the continents and establish nations. Humans, however, had another idea ...

◀B ▶ **Genesis 11:1-9** → Find it here: ◀01% ▶ **Genesis Exodus Leviticus**

At this time everyone spoke the same language. Humans migrated east, settling on a plain in the region of Iraq or Babylonia. They came up with the idea to build a city and a tower out of bricks and tar. Here's why: They said, "When this tower reaches the sky, everybody will remember us and hang around. That way we won't be scattered all over the earth." When God inspected this project, He said, "If they continue building as one people, speaking one language, they will never disperse to reclaim the earth. Here's what we'll do. We'll divide their languages so they won't be able to understand one another." That's what God did, and the result was the scattering of the people groups of the earth. They called the unfinished city, Babel, because that's what people sounded like to one another: babble.

- **At this time** 100 years, possibly more, after the Flood
- **Iraq** *Shinar* in the original text

◀B ▶ Genesis 11:10-26, 11:32, 21:5, 25:7

→ Find it here: ◀01% ▶ Genesis Exodus Leviticus

Father	Age when son was born	Son(s)	Years lived after son was born	Total life span
Shem	100	Arphaxad	500	600
Arphaxad	35	Shelah	403	438
Shelah	30	Eber	403	433
Eber	34	Peleg	430	464
Peleg	30	Reu	209	239
Reu	32	Serug	207	239
Serug	30	Nahor	200	230
Nahor	29	Terah	119	148
Terah	70	Abram, Nahor and Haran	135	205
Abraham (Abram)	100	Isaac	75	175

► **Family tree** Some generations may have been skipped in this chart. If, however, no generations are skipped, then the math says that Shem outlived Abram. The original text does not, in most cases, include the total life span. ► **Abram** Abram's name (meaning exalted father) was later changed to Abraham (meaning father of many). Abraham is known in the Bible as the father of the nation of Israel as well as the "father of faith," or example of faith. ► **Lifespans** Lifespans rapidly declined after the Flood. Various explanations are offered, including a change in diet, the loss of a protective canopy or atmosphere that shielded humans from harmful radiation, degradation of the gene pool. ► **Dates** It's difficult to put a date on many of the events of Genesis. Some place Adam about 4000 BC, the Flood at about 2300 BC, and Abraham at about 2000 BC, but many Bible scholars hold differing views.

|| Discoveries: Knowing What to Expect

“Instead, as long as earth lasts, there will be times of planting and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.” / Genesis 8:22 [Day 65]

God has built into our lives certain rhythms. They give us a sense of security—a sense of knowing what to expect. I live in Wisconsin, and it usually starts getting cold in October and doesn’t really get reliably warm until late April. Although I find beauty in winter, my enthusiasm for cold, snow and ice isn’t what it was 35 years ago. But I love the spring. May is one of my favorite months. May signifies to me the end of winter and the beginning of summer.

What’s the point? The point is this: We experience winters, some of them harder than others. But spring is coming. The tide is changing. Dawn is approaching. Harvest will come. God has built rhythms deep in our experience that teach us He will bring us out, and we will be okay.

?? Why was it important to God that people groups establish nations? □

Was there ever a time when your plans and God’s conflicted? How did you handle that? □

Do you speak more than one language? How hard was it to learn? □

How do you handle the “winters” in your life? □

Your main take away from today’s reading ... □

Day 67: Faith, Beauty and Deception

◀B ▶ Genesis 12:1-20 → Find it here: ◀01% ▶ Genesis Exodus Leviticus

God said to Abram, “Leave your country and your family of origin. Once you start traveling, I’ll show you where to go. Your descendants will become a great nation. I will bless you. I will make you go down in history as a great man. I will bless those who bless you. I will curse those who curse you. Through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”

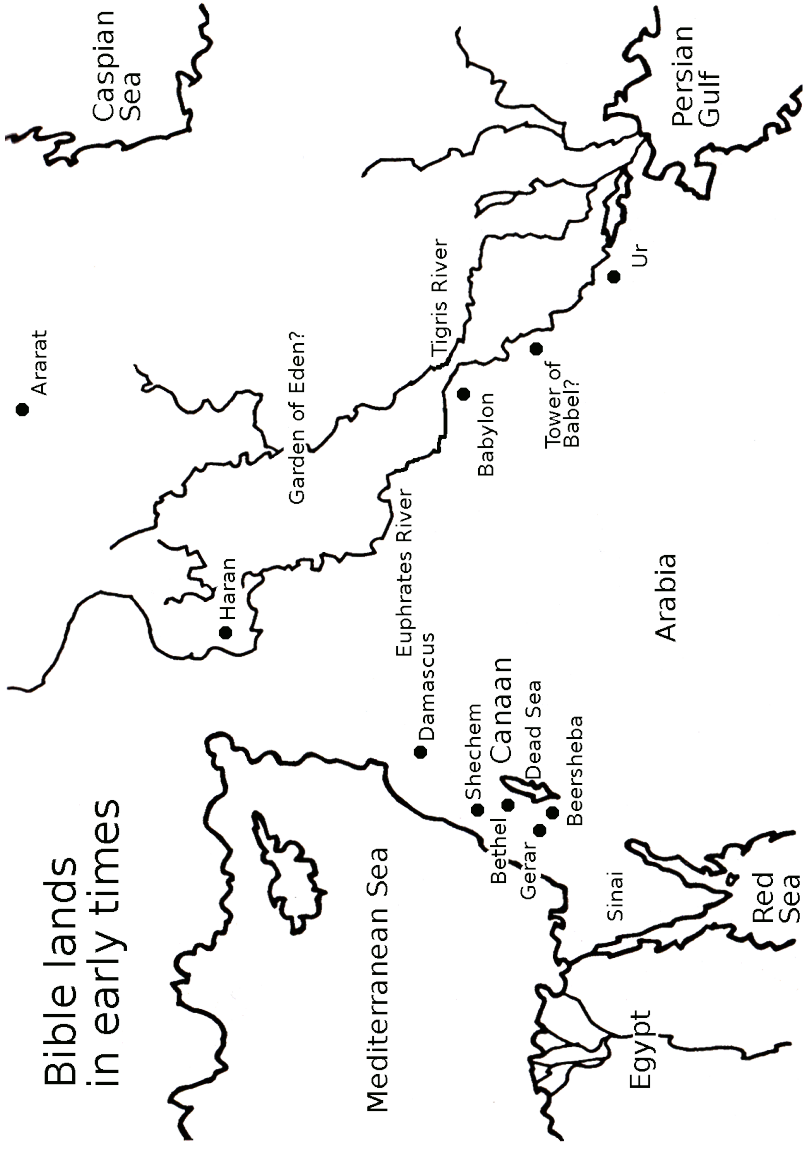
At age 75, Abram set out with his wife, Sarai, and his nephew, Lot, along with his possessions and workers. They traveled to the land of Canaan and set up camp near Shechem. (The land was occupied by the descendants of Canaan.) But God appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.” So Abram built an altar at that place to honor God. Abram journeyed on, setting up camp, building altars, traveling past Bethel and Ai, going all the way to the dry lands in the south, the Negev.

Then famine hit. No food anywhere! So Abram traveled to Egypt. On the way, he said to his wife, Sarai, “What are we going to do? You’re so beautiful that if the Egyptians think you’re my wife, they’ll kill me to get their hands on you. Please tell them you are my sister. That way they will treat me well.”

When they arrived in Egypt, the Egyptians took note of Sarai’s beauty and recommended her to Pharaoh as an addition to his harem. To show his appreciation, Pharaoh showered Abram with gifts: all kinds of livestock, servants, camels. But God brought disease into Pharaoh’s household because of Sarai; everybody fell deathly ill. Pharaoh connected the dots and summoned Abram. “What kind of trick have you played on me? Why didn’t you tell me she’s your wife? Why the lie? Take your wife and get out.” Then Pharaoh’s soldiers escorted Abram and everything he had out of their country.

► **Abram** (also known as Abraham) According to Genesis, Abram was born in Ur, a city in Chaldea (Iraq). Abram’s father, Terah, moved his family over 900 miles (1500 km) northwest to Haran, also spelled Harran, which is located in Turkey. Abram traveled about 600 miles (950 km) south to Shechem in Canaan (now Israel). Terah had a son, Haran (not to be confused with the city), whose son was Lot. Haran died in Ur. Lot traveled with Terah and then later with Abram. Nahor, Abram’s other brother, figures into the story later as the grandfather of Laban and Rebekah. Abram married his half sister, Sarai. Abram’s name was later changed to Abraham. Sarai’s name was later changed to Sarah.

Bible lands in early times



► **Bless** This term is often used in the Bible. When God blesses someone, He brings good into that person's life. Blessings could include a gift, financial prosperity, a marriage partner, peace of mind, eternal life with God. A blessing from someone other than God sometimes means a spoken, positive affirmation or wish, or it may include some gift or act of kindness. Curse conveys the opposite meaning. ► **Bless you ... curse you** This is usually understood to apply to more than just Abram, but also to his descendants, particularly to the nation of Israel. ► **Altars** were used as a place where sacrifices (typically animal sacrifices) were made. Part or all of the animal was consumed by a fire. Sometimes a portion of the animal was cooked and consumed by the worshiper or by a priest. ► **Please tell them you are my sister.** In reality, Sarai was Abram's half sister. Even so, it seems incredible that Abram actually thought this half-baked plan had any chance of succeeding. It could have been a disaster, but God intervened to bail him out. ► **Pharaoh** A term for the ruler of Egypt

⚡ Discoveries: When God Appears

God appeared to Abram / Genesis 12:7 [Day 67]

I wonder how many times Abram felt like turning back. Clearly he felt vulnerable; he felt the need to lie about his wife to protect his own skin. The years were going by, and the promise that he would be made into a great nation hadn't even resulted in a single child. Every day he was reminded that he was a stranger, a guest, a pilgrim in a land he did not own—a land where shepherds fought over grazing rights and watering holes, and if you lost the fight, you might not survive.

Despite whatever fears, disappointments and struggles he faced, Abram traveled through the land.

And then the LORD appeared to him.

One day I prayed with someone who said, "The Lord will never speak to me." Yet before we were done praying, the Lord did speak soothing words of comfort and healing.

I knew He would, because at the right moment the LORD will always appear. I don't know what form that will take for you. But I do know that the LORD is watching over our journey. He knows when we get tired and discouraged. He knows when we run out of hope and help. He knows when we have nothing left.

Then He will appear, and we will discover that everything we need is in Him.

?? Abram took the plunge. He took God's hand and set out without really knowing what he was getting into. What's the most reckless thing you've ever done in your spiritual journey? □

God made several promises to Abram, all of which came true. What promises has God made to you? What difference, if any, do those promises make in your everyday life? □

Abram built altars to honor God. What is your way of honoring God? □

What do you think of Abram's strategy for staying out of trouble in Egypt? What do you learn about God from this incident? □

Your main take away from today's reading ... □

Day 68: A Rescue Operation

◀B ▶ Genesis 13 & 14 (selected verses) →

Find it here: ◀01% ▶ Genesis Exodus Leviticus

Abram left Egypt and returned to Canaan, rich with livestock, silver and gold. Abram's nephew Lot traveled with him, but there wasn't enough pasture to support their combined herds and flocks. Because of this, their ranch hands were arguing. So Abram spoke up. "Why fight? We're family. Let's split up. You go one way; I'll go the other."

Lot looked at the verdant land near the Jordan River, and chose that for himself. So the two parted company. Lot camped out near the city of Sodom. But the people of Sodom were intent on sinning against God as much as they could. They worked overtime to do evil.

After this, God said to Abram, "Look around in every direction—everything you see will someday belong to your descendants. Can you count the grains of sand? That's how your descendants will be. Walk around the land and know that this will all someday belong to your family." Abram built an altar to God.

Later, war broke out; four kings against five. Sodom was on the losing side, so Lot was captured along with his family and everything he owned. Someone escaped and brought the news to Abram. Abram and his workers—318 in all—took off after the conquering army. They traveled north, overtook them, and split into smaller groups to attack them in the middle of the night. The conquering army fled; Abram and his men chased them all the way past Damascus. They recovered everything including Lot, his family and everything that belonged to him.

After Abram returned in triumph, Melchizedek, king of Salem, came out to meet him. Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High, said to Abram, "I praise God Most High who favors you, Abram, and gave you victory over your enemies." Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of the plunder he recovered.

The king of Sodom was also there. He said, "Give me my people, but you can keep all the plunder." But Abram replied, "No way. I have promised God Most High that I won't take anything that belongs to you—not even a nickel. You will never be able to say, 'I made Abram rich.'"

► **War** This is the first war or battle mentioned in the Bible. Although we aren't given the size of the armies, it appears that Abram prevailed with a much smaller force.

► **Four kings against five** The kings were most likely leaders of city states.

► **Melchizedek** is the first priest mentioned in the Bible. His name means "king of righteousness."

► **Salem** later became Jerusalem. "Salem" means peace. The greeting, "Shalom," and the name, "Solomon," are related Hebrew words, all signifying "peace."

|| Discoveries: Worth It

God said to Abram, "Leave your country and your family of origin. Once you start traveling, I'll show you where to go." Genesis 12:1 [Day 67]

God was up front with Abram about the cost. It would cost him citizenship. It would cost him things familiar. It would cost him relationships.

God asks us to pay a price.

For ten years I lived a sleep-deprived life. My four kids were a big part of the reason. It took them a long time to get used to the idea of getting to sleep and staying that way until morning. Kim did a lot of night-time duty, and so did I. And I paid for it. Many times as I was driving down the road I would catch myself dreaming, and I'd realize I was asleep and driving. I needed to wake up.

But I don't resent the lost sleep. I was happy to hold my children, to talk to them, to share life with them. Love has no value until we pay the price.

God brought us into an eternal love relationship. As Christ's disciples, we take up our cross and follow Him. Why? Because God cares enough about us to ensure that we understand the value of what we have in Him.

But when it's over, we won't think about what we gave up. We will look into the face of God, just as I look into the faces of my children, and only think about what we have gained.

?? Lot clearly takes the best grazing lands for himself. Yet Abram seems okay with it. Why? Have there been times in your life when you've given others the better deal and taken less for yourself? How did that feel? □

Why did God want Abram to walk around the land? What was He doing for Abram's faith? How is God building your faith? □

Easy-going Abram and his amateur army take down the dominant power in that region at that time. What's your take away from that? □

Why do you think Abram answered the king of Sodom the way he did? Under what conditions do you think it's best to refuse a gift? □

Your main take away from today's reading ... □

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