



THE *Life*





# Recovery™

BIBLE

*Personal Size Edition*

Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

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Tyndale House Publishers and Wycliffe Bible Translators share the vision for an understandable, accurate translation of the Bible for every person in the world. Each sale of the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, benefits Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe is working with partners around the world to accomplish Vision 2025—an initiative to start a Bible translation program in every language group that needs it by the year 2025.

### THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our dependencies—that our life had become unmanageable.
2. We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. We made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God.
4. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. We humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.
8. We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. We continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

*The Twelve Steps used in the Twelve Steps devotional reading plan in this Bible have been adapted from the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.*

### THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

*The Twelve Steps are reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that AA has reviewed or approved the contents of this publication, nor that AA agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism—use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after AA, but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.*

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## THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

<i>The Old Testament</i>					
3	GENESIS	877	JEREMIAH	1367	1 CORINTHIANS
75	EXODUS	939	LAMENTATIONS	1391	2 CORINTHIANS
127	LEVITICUS	947	EZEKIEL	1409	GALATIANS
165	NUMBERS	1003	DANIEL	1421	EPHESIANS
213	DEUTERONOMY	1025	HOSEA	1431	PHILIPPIANS
255	JOSHUA	1039	JOEL	1441	COLOSSIANS
289	JUDGES	1045	AMOS	1449	1 THESSALONIANS
323	RUTH	1055	OBADIAH	1455	2 THESSALONIANS
331	1 SAMUEL	1059	JONAH	1462	1 TIMOTHY
375	2 SAMUEL	1065	MICAH	1471	2 TIMOTHY
411	1 KINGS	1073	NAHUM	1479	TITUS
447	2 KINGS	1077	HABAKKUK	1485	PHILEMON
487	1 CHRONICLES	1081	ZEPHANIAH	1489	HEBREWS
525	2 CHRONICLES	1087	HAGGAI	1511	JAMES
571	EZRA	1091	ZECHARIAH	1521	1 PETER
585	NEHEMIAH	1106	MALACHI	1533	2 PETER
607	ESTHER			1539	1 JOHN
619	JOB		<i>The New Testament</i>	1549	2 JOHN
653	PSALMS	1113	MATTHEW	1551	3 JOHN
759	PROVERBS	1165	MARK	1555	JUDE
791	ECCLESIASTES	1199	LUKE	1559	REVELATION
805	SONG OF SONGS	1253	JOHN		
813	ISAIAH	1293	ACTS		
		1341	ROMANS		

## ALPHABETICAL LIST OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

1293	ACTS	1511	JAMES	585	NEHEMIAH
1045	AMOS	877	JEREMIAH	165	NUMBERS
487	1 CHRONICLES	619	JOB	1055	OBADIAH
525	2 CHRONICLES	1039	JOEL	1521	1 PETER
1441	COLOSSIANS	1253	JOHN	1533	2 PETER
1367	1 CORINTHIANS	1539	1 JOHN	1485	PHILEMON
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607	ESTHER	289	JUDGES	323	RUTH
75	EXODUS	411	1 KINGS	331	1 SAMUEL
947	EZEKIEL	447	2 KINGS	375	2 SAMUEL
571	EZRA	939	LAMENTATIONS	805	SONG OF SONGS
1409	GALATIANS	127	LEVITICUS	1449	1 THESSALONIANS
3	GENESIS	1199	LUKE	1455	2 THESSALONIANS
1077	HABAKKUK	1106	MALACHI	1462	1 TIMOTHY
1087	HAGGAI	1165	MARK	1471	2 TIMOTHY
1489	HEBREWS	1113	MATTHEW	1479	TITUS
1025	HOSEA	1065	MICAH	1091	ZECHARIAH
813	ISAIAH	1073	NAHUM	1081	ZEPHANIAH

## A NOTE TO READERS

WITH 40 million copies in print, *The Living Bible* has been meeting a great need in people's hearts for more than thirty years. But even good things can be improved, so ninety evangelical scholars from various theological backgrounds and denominations were commissioned in 1989 to begin revising *The Living Bible*. The end result of this seven-year process is the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*—a general-purpose translation that is accurate, easy to read, and excellent for study.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning of the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts as accurately as possible to the modern reader. The New Living Translation is based on the most recent scholarship in the theory of translation. The challenge for the translators was to create a text that would make the same impact in the life of modern readers that the original text had for the original readers. In the New Living Translation, this is accomplished by translating entire thoughts (rather than just words) into natural, everyday English. The end result is a translation that is easy to read and understand and that accurately communicates the meaning of the original text.

We believe that this new translation, which combines the latest in scholarship with the best in translation style, will speak to your heart. We present the New Living Translation with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and to the world in a fresh, new way.

*The Publishers*  
July 1996



# USER'S GUIDE

**T**HE *HOLY BIBLE* is a book about recovery. It records how the world began and how God created it to be good. Then it tells us about the beginning of sin—about the first time people decided to reject God's plan. It spells out the fatal consequences that result from rejecting God's program. But the Bible doesn't leave us in despair. It reveals a plan for recovery and the source of the power to accomplish it. It provides us with the only pathway to wholeness—God's program for reconciliation and healing.

Each feature in *The Life Recovery Bible* leads readers to the powerful resources for recovery found in the Holy Scriptures:

## DEVOTIONAL READING PLANS

Each devotional is set near the Scripture it comments on and directs the reader to the next devotional in the reading chain. To get a bird's-eye view of each of these reading plans, turn to the indexes at the back of this Bible.

\* The **Twelve Step Devotional Reading Plan** includes eighty-four Bible-based devotionals built around the Twelve Steps.

*To begin this reading plan, turn to page 23.*

\* The **Recovery Principle Devotional Reading Plan** is composed of fifty-six Bible-based devotionals shaped around principles important in the recovery process.

*To begin this reading plan, turn to page 5.*

\* The **Serenity Prayer Devotional Reading Plan** is made up of thirty Bible-based devotionals related to the Serenity Prayer.

*To begin this reading plan, turn to page 25.*

## RECOVERY PROFILES

In this feature sixty individuals and relationships are profiled, and important recovery lessons are

drawn from their lives. For a quick view of the profiles included, see the Index to Recovery Profiles on page 1632.

## INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL FOR BIBLE BOOKS

Each book of the Bible is preceded by a number of helpful features.

- \* **Book Introduction** presents the content and themes from the standpoint of recovery.
- \* **The Big Picture** gives a panoramic view of the book in outline form.
- \* **The Bottom Line** provides vital historical information for the book.
- \* **Recovery Themes** present and discuss important themes for people in recovery.

## RECOVERY COMMENTARY NOTES

The Bible text is supported by numerous **Recovery Notes** that pinpoint passages and thoughts important to recovery. The notes appear at the foot of each page and are indexed in the Life Recovery Topical Index beginning on page 1583.

- \* Additional commentary material is provided in the **Recovery Reflections** that follow many of the Bible books. The notes are arranged topically. The topics discussed in this feature are indexed in the Index to Recovery Reflections on page 1637.

## INDEXES

The **Life Recovery Topical Index** guides the reader to the important notes, profiles, devotionals, and recovery themes related to more than a hundred terms important to issues in the recovery process.

- \* The **Index to Recovery Profiles** alphabetically lists and locates the sixty Recovery Profiles that appear in this Bible.
- \* The **Index to Twelve Step Devotionals** lists and locates the eighty-four Twelve Step devotionals.
- \* The **Index to Recovery Principle Devotionals** lists and locates the fifty-six Recovery Principle devotionals.
- \* The **Index to Serenity Prayer Devotionals** lists and locates the thirty Serenity Prayer devotionals.
- \* The **Index to Recovery Reflections** lists and locates the various topics discussed in the Reflections feature of this Bible.

## PREFACE

**T**HE BIBLE is the greatest book on recovery ever written. In its pages we see God set out a plan for the recovery of his broken people and creation. We meet numerous individuals whose hurting lives are restored through the wisdom and power of God. We meet the God who is waiting with arms outstretched for all of us to turn back to him, seek after his will, and recover the wonderful life he has for each of us.

Many of us are just waking up to the fact that recovery is an essential part of life for everyone. It is the simple but challenging process of daily seeking God's will for our life instead of demanding to go our own way. Recovery is letting God do for us what we cannot do for ourselves while also taking the steps necessary to draw closer to our Creator and Redeemer. It is allowing God to heal our wounded soul so we can help others in the process of healing. All of us need to take part in this process; it is an inherent part of being human.

Let us set out together on the journey toward healing and newfound strength—not strength found within ourselves, but strength found through trusting God and allowing him to direct our decisions and plans. This journey will take us through the Twelve Steps and other materials designed to help us focus on the provisions our powerful God offers for recovery. *The Life Recovery Bible* will enrich our experience and expand our understanding of the God who loves us and sent his Son to die that we might be made whole.

Without God there is no recovery, only disappointing substitutions and repeated failure. We pray that the resources within these pages will help us all better understand who God is and how he wants to heal our brokenness and set us on the path toward wholeness.

THE  
OLD  
TESTAMENT





# GENESIS

## THE BIG PICTURE

### A. GOD SETS THE STAGE

(1:1–11:32)

#### 1. Formation of the Universe (1:1–2:25)

- a. God creates matter, energy, and the natural order (1:1–2:3)
- b. God prepares pristine surroundings for the first family (2:4–25)

#### 2. Fall of the Human Race (3:1–24)

- a. Commission of sin (3:1–8)
- b. Curse on sin (3:9–24)

#### 3. Failure of Society (4:1–9:29)

- a. Failure of humankind (4:1–6:22)
- b. Flood of judgment (7:1–9:29)

#### 4. Folly of Rebellion (10:1–11:32)

- a. Dispersal of the people (10:1–32)
- b. Disobedience of the people (11:1–32)

### B. GOD CHOOSES THE PLAYERS (12:1–50:26)

1. Abraham (12:1–25:18)
2. Isaac (25:19–27:46)
3. Jacob (28:1–36:43)
4. Joseph (37:1–50:26)

The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. It records how the world began and how God created it to be good. It tells us about the first people and how God made them to be excellent. But then it tells us about the beginning of sin—about the first time people decided to reject the program God had laid out for them. It records the first days of shame and of covering up. It records the beginning of our separation from God, each other, and the world God gave us.

We will see how people with perfect health, living in a perfect environment, rebelled against God. And we will see the consequences of their rebellion. We are given intimate glimpses of individuals dominated by hatred, drunkenness, lust, unhealthy family relationships, greed, cheating, irresponsibility, dishonesty, jealousy, violence, and other problems.

But the book of Genesis doesn't leave us in despair. It tells us of yet another beginning. It records how God chose a man named Abraham to father a special nation. And through this nation would come the solution for our separation from God, each other, and the world God gave us. Genesis begins the story of how God began his work of healing broken humanity—a healing to be expressed in the laws he would give his people and culminating in the coming of Jesus, the promised Messiah.

The book of Genesis reminds us of where all our problems began. It spells out the fatal consequences of rejecting God's program. But it also begins the age-long story of God's amazing love for the human race. Through this book we will discover that the only pathway to spiritual wholeness is in following God's program.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

**PURPOSE:** To tell us about the beginning of things, including human opportunities and difficulties, and to demonstrate that God's solutions are the only ones that work. **AUTHOR:** Moses. **AUDIENCE:** The people of Israel. **DATE WRITTEN:** Chapters 1–11 deal with the undatable past; the events of chapters 12–50 are to be dated between about 2000 and 1800 B.C. The book was probably written shortly after 1445 B.C. **SETTING:** Mesopotamia, then Canaan, finally Egypt. **KEY VERSE:** "And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD declared him righteous because of his faith" (15:6). **KEY EVENTS:** Creation, the Fall, the Flood, the Tower of Babel. **KEY PEOPLE:** Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph.

## RECOVERY THEMES

**A Good Creation:** Everything about God's creation was described as being good except the fact that Adam was alone. In fact, Adam's isolation is the only thing in the first two chapters of Genesis that God considered to be a problem. When God created a partner for man, then God was pleased with everything in his creation. Because God was pleased with what he created, he stayed involved, even after Adam and Eve disobeyed him. In fact, ever since the Fall God has been seeking to make things right again. Our sinfulness always leads us away from God and distorts the way God created us to be. But recovery always involves growth toward God's original ideal for the human race. As we progress in recovery, we take part in God's re-creation of our fallen world.

**A Ruined World:** Adam's and Eve's disobedience affected all of God's creation. The idyllic world of the garden was gone forever, and life became a struggle. Our futile attempts to avoid the realities of a ruined world have led us into all kinds of destructive behaviors. Recovery begins when we squarely face the broken realities of our world—its daily struggles and hardships. Once we have done this, we have started down the road of recovery. We have entered the spiritual arena where battles are fought to regain what has been lost.

**Promises of Healing:** The book of Genesis presents us with a series of "new beginnings" that come out of the ruin of our sinfulness. In the original Fall, God promised hope and healing for us when he told the serpent that the offspring of the woman would crush his head. When people generally continued to disobey, God sent the Flood as judgment for their sinfulness. After the Flood, God again promised victory and confirmed that promise with a rainbow. Then the people rejected God again, building a great tower as a memorial of their pride. In response, God confused their languages, further fragmenting society. Then God chose a man named Abram and promised to bless all nations of the world through his offspring. Each time that human sin brought ruin, God promised victory and recovery in the face of it.

**Hope for Reconciliation:** As people began to experience the terrible consequences of their disobedience, God didn't leave them to figure out a plan for recovery all alone; nor did he leave a long list of principles or rules to follow that would repair their damaged relationships. Instead, God always worked with people on a very personal level in the recovery process. As we enter into the recovery process, we find it to be relational in nature. It requires us to seek reconciliation with people close to us, and this includes God. In Genesis, God modeled this pattern for us time and again. He chose certain individuals and worked patiently in their lives, reconciling them with himself and the people around them.

## CHAPTER 1

### The Account of Creation

In the beginning God created\* the heavens and the earth.<sup>2</sup>The earth was empty, a formless mass cloaked in darkness. And the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface.<sup>3</sup>Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.<sup>4</sup>And God saw that it was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness.<sup>5</sup>God called the light "day" and the darkness "night." Together these made up one day.

<sup>6</sup>And God said, "Let there be space between the waters, to separate water from water."<sup>7</sup>And so it was. God made this space to

separate the waters above from the waters below.<sup>8</sup>And God called the space "sky." This happened on the second day.

<sup>9</sup>And God said, "Let the waters beneath the sky be gathered into one place so dry ground may appear." And so it was.<sup>10</sup>God named the dry ground "land" and the water "seas." And God saw that it was good.<sup>11</sup>Then God said, "Let the land burst forth with every sort of grass and seed-bearing plant. And let there be trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. The seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came." And so it was.<sup>12</sup>The land was filled with seed-bearing

**1:1** Or *In the beginning when God created, or When God began to create.*

**1:4** God was pleased with his creation. He declared that it was good. God stopped now and then to approve of what he had designed and created (1:4-5, 9-10, 11-12, 18, 21-22, 25, 31). Many of our problems and dependencies result from the misuse of God's good creation. Recovery sometimes involves discovering the good things that we have misused and learning how to enjoy them in the way God intended.

**1:24** The phrase "And so it was" (also in 1:9-12, 14-15) shows us that God's creative activity was done in complete conformity to the specifications he had originally intended. God accomplishes his will with certainty and precision. It should reassure us to know that God's good desires for us can be accomplished with the same certainty.

plants and trees, and their seeds produced plants and trees of like kind. And God saw that it was good. <sup>13</sup>This all happened on the third day.

<sup>14</sup>And God said, “Let bright lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. They will be signs to mark off the seasons, the days, and the years. <sup>15</sup>Let their light shine down upon the earth.” And so it was. <sup>16</sup>For God made two great lights, the sun and the moon, to shine down upon the earth. The greater one, the sun, presides during the day; the lesser one, the moon, presides through the night. He also made the stars. <sup>17</sup>God set these lights in the heavens to light the earth, <sup>18</sup>to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. <sup>19</sup>This all happened on the fourth day.

<sup>20</sup>And God said, “Let the waters swarm with fish and other life. Let the skies be filled with birds of every kind.” <sup>21</sup>So God created great sea creatures and every sort of fish and every kind of bird. And God saw that it was good. <sup>22</sup>Then God blessed them, saying, “Let the fish multiply and fill the oceans. Let the birds increase and fill the earth.” <sup>23</sup>This all happened on the fifth day.

<sup>24</sup>And God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of animal—livestock, small animals, and wildlife.” And so it was. <sup>25</sup>God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to reproduce more of its own kind. And God saw that it was good.

<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make people\* in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals,\* and small animals.”

<sup>27</sup>So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup>God blessed them and told them, “Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters over the fish and birds and all the animals.” <sup>29</sup>And God said, “Look! I have given you the seed-bearing plants throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food. <sup>30</sup>And I have given all the grasses and other green plants to the animals and birds for their food.” And so it was. <sup>31</sup>Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was excellent in every way. This all happened on the sixth day.

► **The recovery principle devotional reading plan begins here.**

## Self-Perception

READ GENESIS 1:26-31

If we have lived in bondage to our compulsive behaviors for a while, we probably see more bad than good inside us. Many of us tend to see life in terms of all or nothing. As a result, we probably think we are all bad. But in recovery, we need a balanced understanding of ourself. We need to see that along with our bad points we have also been gifted with strengths. It's not an either/or proposition. A balanced view of ourself will help us better understand our shortcomings while also giving us greater hope in our potential.

At the end of the fifth day of creation God had made everything except the first people. The Bible tells us that when he looked at what he had made so far, “God saw that it was good.” Then God created the first man and woman. “So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; . . . God blessed them and told them, ‘Multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. Be masters over the fish and birds and all the animals.’ . . . Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was excellent in every way” (Genesis 1:25, 27-31).

God distinguished between the human race and the rest of creation. He made us in his very image, with capacities far beyond those of mere animals. God was (and is) excited about us! He gave us abilities and responsibilities to reflect his own nature in all of creation. When he created us, he was proud of what he had made!

Although we have a sinful nature that came as a result of the Fall, we also must remember that we were created in the likeness of God. There are excellence and dignity inherent in being human that should cause us to ponder our potential for good as well as for bad. **Turn to page 30, Genesis 22.**

## CHAPTER 2

So the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in them was completed. <sup>2</sup>On the seventh day, having finished his task, God rested from all his work. <sup>3</sup>And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from his work of creation.

<sup>4</sup>This is the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth.

**The Man and Woman in Eden**

When the LORD God made the heavens and the earth, <sup>5</sup>there were no plants or grain growing on the earth, for the LORD God had not sent any rain. And no one was there to cultivate the soil. <sup>6</sup>But water came up out of the ground and watered all the land. <sup>7</sup>And the LORD God formed a man's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person.

<sup>8</sup>Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had created. <sup>9</sup>And the LORD God planted all sorts of trees in the garden—beautiful trees that produced delicious fruit. At the center of the garden he placed the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>10</sup>A river flowed from the land of Eden, watering the garden and then dividing into four branches. <sup>11</sup>One of these branches is the Pishon, which flows around the entire land of Havilah, where gold is found. <sup>12</sup>The gold of that land is exceptionally pure; aromatic resin and onyx stone are also found there. <sup>13</sup>The second branch is the Gihon, which flows around the entire land of Cush. <sup>14</sup>The third

branch is the Tigris, which flows to the east of Asshur. The fourth branch is the Euphrates.

<sup>15</sup>The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it. <sup>16</sup>But the LORD God gave him this warning: "You may freely eat any fruit in the garden <sup>17</sup>except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die."

<sup>18</sup>And the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him." <sup>19</sup>So the LORD God formed from the soil every kind of animal and bird. He brought them to Adam\* to see what he would call them, and Adam chose a name for each one. <sup>20</sup>He gave names to all the livestock, birds, and wild animals. But still there was no companion suitable for him. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. He took one of Adam's ribs\* and closed up the place from which he had taken it. <sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib and brought her to Adam.

<sup>23</sup>"At last!" Adam exclaimed. "She is part of my own flesh and bone! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken out of a man." <sup>24</sup>This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. <sup>25</sup>Now, although Adam and his wife were both naked, neither of them felt any shame.

## CHAPTER 3

**The Man and Woman Sin**

Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the creatures the LORD God had made. "Really?" he asked the woman. "Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?"

**2:19** Hebrew *the man*, and so throughout this chapter. **2:21** Or *took a part of Adam's side*.

**2:2-3** This is the first mention of Sabbath rest—one day of rest in seven. By his example God encourages us to designate a portion of our life to rest and spiritual rejuvenation. Without proper rest, it is very difficult to deal with the other matters in our life, especially our progress in recovery.

**2:8-14** God provided a perfect environment for the first people. We often blame our outward circumstances for our difficulties. It is important to note here that in spite of their ideal surroundings, our first parents fell—they failed. Although the environments we live in can certainly add to our problems, they are never entirely at fault. We need to take responsibility for our own mistakes and failures.

**3:1-5** The account here pictures for us the process of temptation. The serpent offered something that had been forbidden by God as a very attractive option. The serpent also caused Eve to doubt God and the truth of his word. During the debate, Eve offered some halfhearted opposition, but her growing doubt in God weakened her resolve. In the end she gave in. Satan strengthened his temptation by weakening Eve's faith in God. Staying close to God and maintaining our faith in him will weaken the power of temptation in our life.

**3:12-13** When Adam was questioned, notice that he blamed the woman for his problem. He even backhandedly blamed God by reminding God that he was the one who had given him the woman in the first place. Then Eve blamed the serpent for the problem. Passing the buck is a standard human response to guilt. But true recovery requires that we take a thorough inventory of our life, accepting responsibility for everything we have done or failed to do.





# ADAM & EVE

It was an ideal situation: a man and his wife living harmoniously together in a lush, beautiful garden that God had created for their pleasure. They each enjoyed a perfect relationship with God and with each other. But when Adam and Eve gave in to temptation, they overstepped their God-given boundaries and plunged the human race into sin. Harmony was broken. Shame and guilt penetrated their lives and created an invisible barrier between them and God. The consequences of their disobedience and lack of self-control are with us to this day.

Adam and Eve knew that they had gone against God's plan—a plan that was created with their best interests in mind. And the consequences of their sin followed immediately. Right away they became afraid of the God who loved them so much, and they hid from his presence. They also became ashamed of their nakedness and set out to cover themselves. The relationship between Adam and Eve began to show cracks and strains. Accusations were made. Blame was shifted. Neither of them wanted to be held accountable. Both of them refused to admit that they were wrong. Needless to say, their relationship was damaged. Their sin had separated them from each other and from God.

But the story doesn't end there. Adam and Eve stayed together in spite of the shame and guilt they felt. Their lives were marred by sin and scarred by wounds inflicted on one another. However, they faced the reality that life had to go on and began to build a new life together. And by love, commitment, and the grace of God, they persevered through life's trials.

The story of Adam and Eve is found in the opening chapters of Genesis. Adam and/or Eve are also mentioned in 1 Chronicles 1:1; Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45-49; 2 Corinthians 11:3; and 1 Timothy 2:13-15.

## STRENGTHS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- They were the parents of the entire human race.
- They were committed to each other through the trials they faced.
- Their story provides us with the first illustration of God's grace.

## WEAKNESSES AND MISTAKES:

- They were disobedient to the plan that God had revealed to them.
- They were not willing to take responsibility for their sin.
- They made excuses rather than admit the truth.
- Their actions brought sin into the world.

## LESSONS FROM THEIR LIVES:

- A good marriage requires love and commitment even through tough times.
- Relationships that accept God's grace and forgiveness persevere through life's difficulties.
- Complacency is a breeding ground for temptation—be on guard against Satan's schemes.
- The mistakes of parents are often passed on to their descendants.

## KEY VERSES:

<sup>1</sup>Then God said, "Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves. They will be masters over all life—the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the livestock, wild animals, and small animals." So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26-27).

<sup>2</sup>"Of course we may eat it," the woman told him. <sup>3</sup>"It's only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God says we must not eat it or even touch it, or we will die."

<sup>4</sup>"You won't die!" the serpent hissed. <sup>5</sup>"God knows that your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God, knowing everything, both good and evil."

<sup>6</sup>The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too. <sup>7</sup>At that moment, their eyes were opened, and

they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves.

<sup>8</sup>Toward evening they heard the LORD God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. <sup>9</sup>The LORD God called to Adam, <sup>\*</sup> "Where are you?"

<sup>10</sup>He replied, "I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked."

<sup>11</sup>"Who told you that you were naked?" the LORD God asked. "Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?"

<sup>12</sup>"Yes," Adam admitted, "but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it."

**3:9** Hebrew *the man*, and so throughout this chapter.

<sup>13</sup>Then the LORD God asked the woman, "How could you do such a thing?"

"The serpent tricked me," she replied. "That's why I ate it."

<sup>14</sup>So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you will be punished. You are singled out from all the domestic and wild animals of the whole earth to be cursed. You will grovel in the dust as long as you live, crawling along on your belly. <sup>15</sup>From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

<sup>16</sup>Then he said to the woman, "You will bear children with intense pain and suffering. And though your desire will be for your husband,\* he will be your master."

<sup>17</sup>And to Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate the fruit I told you not to eat, I have placed a curse on the ground. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. <sup>18</sup>It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains. <sup>19</sup>All your life you will sweat to produce food, until your dying day. Then you will return to the ground from which you came. For you were made from dust, and to the dust you will return."

<sup>20</sup>Then Adam named his wife Eve,\* because she would be the mother of all people everywhere. <sup>21</sup>And the LORD God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife.

<sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God said, "The people have become as we are, knowing everything,

both good and evil. What if they eat the fruit of the tree of life? Then they will live forever!" <sup>23</sup>So the LORD God banished Adam and his wife from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. <sup>24</sup>After banishing them from the garden, the LORD God stationed mighty angelic beings\* to the east of Eden. And a flaming sword flashed back and forth, guarding the way to the tree of life.

## CHAPTER 4

### Cain, Abel, and Seth

Now Adam\* slept with his wife, Eve, and she became pregnant. When the time came, she gave birth to Cain,\* and she said, "With the LORD's help, I have brought forth\* a man!" <sup>2</sup>Later she gave birth to a second son and named him Abel.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain was a farmer. <sup>3</sup>At harvest-time Cain brought to the LORD a gift of his farm produce, <sup>4</sup>while Abel brought several choice lambs from the best of his flock. The LORD accepted Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup>but he did not accept Cain and his offering. This made Cain very angry and dejected.

<sup>6</sup>"Why are you so angry?" the LORD asked him. "Why do you look so dejected? <sup>7</sup>You will be accepted if you respond in the right way. But if you refuse to respond correctly, then watch out! Sin is waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must subdue it."

<sup>8</sup>Later Cain suggested to his brother, Abel, "Let's go out into the fields."\* And while

**3:16** Or *And though you may desire to control your husband.* **3:20** Eve sounds like a Hebrew term that means "to give life." **3:24** Hebrew *cherubim*. **4:1a** Hebrew *the man*. **4:1b** Cain sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean "bring forth" or "acquire." **4:1c** Or *I have acquired.* **4:8** As in Samaritan Pentateuch, Greek and Syriac versions, Latin Vulgate; Masoretic Text lacks "Let's go out into the fields."

**3:21** The very first death occurred on the same day as Adam's and Eve's sin; it was the death of an animal to provide a covering for their nakedness. God's immediate provision for sin was the slaying of an innocent substitute to provide skins to clothe the guilty couple. The clothing they wore must have served as a reminder—engraving the sight of the dying animal in their minds—a picture of the terrible consequences of their sin. As we recognize the suffering we may have caused others, we also are reminded of the consequences of rejecting God's program for our life.

**4:6-7** When God rejected Cain's offering, Cain reacted with dejection and anger. God did not reject Cain for his strong feelings; he offered him an opportunity for a new start. How sad that Cain refused this second chance and instead went out to kill his brother. We need to be careful when we face obstacles to the recovery process. We need to carefully weigh the strong feelings we encounter within ourself before acting on them. If we don't, we may be passing up an excellent opportunity for a fresh start. God is not put off by our strong feelings. Recovery is based on God's grace, which always offers us an opportunity to begin again.

**4:15** The "mark of Cain" was not, as some have taught, a badge of guilt. It was a sign that God gave to Cain for his protection. Even after Cain's great failure, God desired to protect him from harm. Many of us look back and marvel at how God protected us before we began the recovery process. He wants us to be restored and often protects us in the midst of evil so that we are not destroyed. Our gracious God desires only our healing and recovery, even after our greatest failures.

they were there, Cain attacked and killed his brother.

<sup>9</sup>Afterward the LORD asked Cain, “Where is your brother? Where is Abel?”

“I don’t know!” Cain retorted. “Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?”

<sup>10</sup>But the LORD said, “What have you done? Listen—your brother’s blood cries out to me from the ground! <sup>11</sup>You are hereby banished from the ground you have defiled with your brother’s blood. <sup>12</sup>No longer will it yield abundant crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless fugitive on the earth, constantly wandering from place to place.”

<sup>13</sup>Cain replied to the LORD, “My punishment\* is too great for me to bear! <sup>14</sup>You have banished me from my land and from your presence; you have made me a wandering fugitive. All who see me will try to kill me!”

<sup>15</sup>The LORD replied, “They will not kill you, for I will give seven times your punishment to anyone who does.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him. <sup>16</sup>So Cain left the LORD’s presence and settled in the land of Nod,\* east of Eden.

<sup>17</sup>Then Cain’s wife became pregnant and gave birth to a son, and they named him Enoch. When Cain founded a city, he named it Enoch after his son.

<sup>18</sup>Enoch was the father of\* Irad.

Irad was the father of Mehujael.

Mehujael was the father of Methushael.

Methushael was the father of Lamech.

<sup>19</sup>Lamech married two women—Adah and Zillah. <sup>20</sup>Adah gave birth to a baby named Jubal. He became the first of the herdsmen who live in tents. <sup>21</sup>His brother’s name was Jubal, the first musician—the inventor of the harp and flute. <sup>22</sup>To Lamech’s other wife, Zillah, was born Tubal-cain. He was the first to work with metal, forging instruments of bronze and iron. Tubal-cain had a sister named Naamah.

<sup>23</sup>One day Lamech said to Adah and Zillah, “Listen to me, my wives. I have killed a youth who attacked and wounded me. <sup>24</sup>If anyone who kills Cain is to be punished seven times, anyone who takes revenge against me will be punished seventy-seven times!”

<sup>25</sup>Adam slept with his wife again, and she gave birth to another son. She named him

**4:13** Or *My sin*. **4:16** *Nod* means “wandering.” **4:18** Or *the ancestor of*, and so throughout the verse.



## Coming Out of Hiding

BIBLE READING: Genesis 3:6-13

### We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Many of us have spent our life in a state of hiding, ashamed of who we are inside. We may hide by living a double life, by using drugs or other addictions to make us feel like someone else, or by self-righteously setting ourselves above others. Step Four involves uncovering the things we have been hiding, even from ourselves.

After Adam and Eve disobeyed God, “they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover themselves. . . . The LORD God called to Adam, “Where are you?” He replied, “I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked” (Genesis 3:7-10). Human beings have been covering up and hiding ever since!

Jesus consistently confronted the religious leaders about their hypocrisy. The word *hypocrite* describes a person who pretends to have virtues or qualities that he really doesn’t have. One time Jesus said to these leaders, “Hypocrites! You are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! . . . First wash the inside of the cup, and then the outside will become clean, too” (Matthew 23:25-26).

When the real person inside us comes out of hiding, we will have to deal with some dirt! Making this inventory is a good way to “wash the inside”; some of that washing may involve bathing our life with tears. It is only by uncovering the hidden parts of ourself that we will be able to change the outer person, including our addictive/compulsive behaviors. **Turn to page 595, Nehemiah 8.**

Seth,\* for she said, “God has granted me another son in place of Abel, the one Cain killed.”<sup>26</sup>When Seth grew up, he had a son and named him Enosh. It was during his lifetime that people first began to worship the LORD.

## CHAPTER 5

### From Adam to Noah

This is the history of the descendants of Adam. When God created people,\* he made them in the likeness of God.<sup>2</sup>He created them male and female, and he blessed them and called them “human.”\*

<sup>3</sup>When Adam was 130 years old, his son Seth was born,\* and Seth was the very image of his father.\*<sup>4</sup>After the birth of Seth,\* Adam lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters.<sup>5</sup>He died at the age of 930.

<sup>6</sup>When Seth was 105 years old, his son Enosh was born.<sup>7</sup>After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived another 807 years, and he had other sons and daughters.<sup>8</sup>He died at the age of 912.

<sup>9</sup>When Enosh was 90 years old, his son Kenan was born.<sup>10</sup>After the birth of Kenan, Enosh lived another 815 years, and he had other sons and daughters.<sup>11</sup>He died at the age of 905.

<sup>12</sup>When Kenan was 70 years old, his son Mahalalel was born.<sup>13</sup>After the birth of Mahalalel, Kenan lived another 840 years, and he had other sons and daughters.<sup>14</sup>He died at the age of 910.

<sup>15</sup>When Mahalalel was 65 years old, his son Jared was born.<sup>16</sup>After the birth of Jared, Mahalalel lived 830 years, and he had other sons and daughters.<sup>17</sup>He died at the age of 895.

<sup>18</sup>When Jared was 162 years old, his son Enoch was born.<sup>19</sup>After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived another 800 years, and he had other sons and daughters.<sup>20</sup>He died at the age of 962.

<sup>21</sup>When Enoch was 65 years old, his son Methuselah was born.<sup>22</sup>After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch lived another 300 years in close fellowship with God, and he had other sons and daughters.<sup>23</sup>Enoch lived 365 years in all.<sup>24</sup>He enjoyed a close relationship with God throughout his life. Then suddenly, he disappeared because God took him.

<sup>25</sup>When Methuselah was 187 years old, his son Lamech was born.<sup>26</sup>After the birth of Lamech, Methuselah lived another 782 years, and he had other sons and daughters.<sup>27</sup>He died at the age of 969.

<sup>28</sup>When Lamech was 182 years old, his son Noah was born.<sup>29</sup>Lamech named his son Noah,\* for he said, “He will bring us relief from the painful labor of farming this ground that the LORD has cursed.”<sup>30</sup>After the birth of Noah, Lamech lived 595 years, and he had other sons and daughters.<sup>31</sup>He died at the age of 777.

<sup>32</sup>By the time Noah was 500 years old, he had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

**4:25** *Seth* probably means “granted”; the name may also mean “appointed.” **5:1** Hebrew *man*. **5:2** Hebrew *man*.

**5:3a** *Or his son, the ancestor of Seth, was born*; similarly in 5:6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 25. **5:3b** *Hebrew was in his own likeness, after his image*. **5:4** *Or After the birth of this ancestor of Seth*; similarly in 5:7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 26. **5:29** *Noah* sounds like a Hebrew term that can mean “relief” or “comfort.”

**5:1-32** This chapter has often been called the obituary column. Its recurring refrain is “He died . . . he died . . . he died.” Although physical death did not come to Adam and Eve on the day they sinned, it did eventually come. They had reestablished their relationship with God, but the physical consequences of their sin could not be avoided forever. We may hope that after reestablishing our relationship with God, our troubles will be over. But a relationship with God rarely frees us from the consequences of past sins. The consequences usually catch up with us sooner or later. But if we suffer for past mistakes, we can know that God will be with us each step of the way.

**5:21-24** Little is said about the spiritual state of these patriarchs of the human race. But the account of Enoch’s life provides us with a bright spot in this otherwise dismal chapter. Enoch was known to have “enjoyed a close relationship with God throughout his life.” His example should give us hope. Enoch wasn’t trapped by the mistakes or apathy of his peers and ancestors. Instead, he made a new start. And he did it by constantly walking with God.

**6:1-12** Some people insist that the human race is developing and becoming better and better. But when we compare the condition of the world in these verses to the way things were back in the Garden of Eden, it is obvious that the trend has gone in the opposite direction. Without God’s help, we only get worse. It is only by following God’s program and receiving his grace that we can hope to escape the natural slide toward pain and destruction.



# CAIN & ABEL

How often parents of two children have been heard to exclaim, “There have *never* been two children who were more different!” Adam and Eve could well have been the originators of that comment. Cain apparently felt himself to be in direct competition with Abel. This led to a rivalry that was never resolved, resulting in a major tragedy.

Cain became a farmer and Abel a shepherd. It was their offerings, however, not their occupations, that revealed the true nature of their character. Abel did things God’s way, following his requirements. He is called “righteous” in Matthew 23:35, and Hebrews 11:4 says his offering was made by faith. Cain, on the other hand, did things his own way. Jude suggests that his “way” was that of rebellion (Jude 1:11). Cain brought an offering of produce from his gardens, while Abel brought the fatty cuts of meat from his best lambs.

Abel’s altar must have been ugly, assaulting every sense with the bloody carcasses lying across it. But the blood was a part of God’s plan according to Hebrews 12:24. Cain’s offering had the potential of being beautiful. Picture fresh produce, just out of the garden—fruits, vegetables, flowers, and grain—probably lovingly and artistically arranged. Perhaps Cain wanted to be accepted by God on the basis of his own merits. He may not have been willing to have a relationship with God based on a bloody sacrifice. When God accepted Abel’s offering and rejected Cain’s, Cain became angry. But God did not reject him for his anger. Even at that point, God reasoned with him. He offered Cain another opportunity to change his mind and accept divine grace, but still Cain refused. Jealous of Abel, whose offering had been accepted, and raging because God had rejected his own, Cain murdered his brother.

Cain tried to hide his terrible deed, but God was not fooled. God confronted Cain with the murder and assigned the consequence of lifelong exile. Cain spent the rest of his life as an alien, wandering in lands far from his family. But God protected Cain, even when he was in exile; God placed his mark upon Cain to keep him from being killed.

## STRENGTHS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Abel was obedient to God.
- Abel is the first hero mentioned in the “Gallery of Faith” in Hebrews 11.
- Both sons developed skills and worked hard in the occupations they chose.

## WEAKNESSES AND MISTAKES:

- Cain insisted on doing things his own way.
- When rejected, Cain reacted with rage.
- Cain allowed his rage to lead him to commit the first murder.

## LESSONS FROM THEIR LIVES:

- Our righteousness is based on our willingness to follow God’s program by faith.
- Feeling angry does not separate us from God unless we express it in destructive ways.
- Though we may try to hide our sins for a time, God’s justice will prevail.

## KEY VERSE:

“It was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. God accepted Abel’s offering to show that he was a righteous man. And although Abel is long dead, he still speaks to us because of his faith” (Hebrews 11:4).

The account of Cain and Abel is given in Genesis 4. Both are also mentioned in Hebrews 11:4 and 1 John 3:12. Cain alone is referred to in Jude 1:11; Abel is spoken of in Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51; and Hebrews 12:24.

## CHAPTER 6

### Noah and the Flood

When the human population began to grow rapidly on the earth, <sup>2</sup>the sons of God saw the beautiful women of the human race and took any they wanted as their wives. <sup>3</sup>Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not put up with humans for such a long time, for they are only mortal flesh. In the future, they will live no more than 120 years.”

6:4 Hebrew *Nephilim*.

<sup>4</sup>In those days, and even afterward, giants\* lived on the earth, for whenever the sons of God had intercourse with human women, they gave birth to children who became the heroes mentioned in legends of old.

<sup>5</sup>Now the LORD observed the extent of the people’s wickedness, and he saw that all their thoughts were consistently and totally evil. <sup>6</sup>So the LORD was sorry he had ever made them. It broke his heart. <sup>7</sup>And the LORD said,

“I will completely wipe out this human race that I have created. Yes, and I will destroy all the animals and birds, too. I am sorry I ever made them.”<sup>8</sup> But Noah found favor with the LORD.

<sup>9</sup>This is the history of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, the only blameless man living on earth at the time. He consistently followed God’s will and enjoyed a close relationship with him. <sup>10</sup>Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

<sup>11</sup>Now the earth had become corrupt in God’s sight, and it was filled with violence. <sup>12</sup>God observed all this corruption in the world, and he saw violence and depravity everywhere. <sup>13</sup>So God said to Noah, “I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. Yes, I will wipe them all from the face of the earth!

<sup>14</sup>“Make a boat\* from resinous wood and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then construct decks and stalls throughout its interior. <sup>15</sup>Make it 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.\* <sup>16</sup>Construct an opening all the way around the boat, 18 inches\* below the roof. Then put three decks inside the boat—bottom, middle, and upper—and put a door in the side.

<sup>17</sup>“Look! I am about to cover the earth with a flood that will destroy every living thing. Everything on earth will die!<sup>18</sup> But I solemnly swear to keep you safe in the boat, with your wife and your sons and their wives. <sup>19</sup>Bring a pair of every kind of animal—a male and a female—into the boat with you to keep them alive during the flood. <sup>20</sup>Pairs of each kind of bird and each kind of animal, large and small alike, will come to you to be kept alive. <sup>21</sup>And

remember, take enough food for your family and for all the animals.”

<sup>22</sup>So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Flood Covers the Earth

Finally, the day came when the LORD said to Noah, “Go into the boat with all your family, for among all the people of the earth, I consider you alone to be righteous. <sup>2</sup>Take along seven pairs of each animal that I have approved for eating and for sacrifice, and take one pair of each of the others. <sup>3</sup>Then select seven pairs of every kind of bird. There must be a male and a female in each pair to ensure that every kind of living creature will survive the flood. <sup>4</sup>One week from today I will begin forty days and forty nights of rain. And I will wipe from the earth all the living things I have created.”

<sup>5</sup>So Noah did exactly as the LORD had commanded him. <sup>6</sup>He was 600 years old when the flood came, <sup>7</sup>and he went aboard the boat to escape—he and his wife and his sons and their wives. <sup>8</sup>With them were all the various kinds of animals—those approved for eating and sacrifice and those that were not—along with all the birds and other small animals. <sup>9</sup>They came into the boat in pairs, male and female, just as God had commanded Noah. <sup>10</sup>One week later, the flood came and covered the earth.

<sup>11</sup>When Noah was 600 years old, on the seventeenth day of the second month, the underground waters burst forth on the earth, and the rain fell in mighty torrents from the sky. <sup>12</sup>The rain continued to fall for forty days and forty nights. <sup>13</sup>But Noah had gone into the boat that very day with his wife and his

**6:14** Traditionally rendered *an ark*. **6:15** Hebrew *300 cubits* [135 meters] *long, 50 cubits* [22.5 meters] *wide, and 30 cubits* [13.5 meters] *high*. **6:16** Hebrew *1 cubit* [45 centimeters].

**6:8-10** God did not destroy the righteous with the wicked. These verses are another statement of God’s grace. God extended grace to Noah and his family. Noah, like Enoch, lived his life in constant fellowship with God. He broke the mold set by his ancestors and neighbors by drawing close to God. As a result, Noah lived through the Flood and became the second father of the human race.

**6:22** One has to wonder whether God’s instructions made any sense to Noah. God told him to build a gigantic boat far from the nearest body of navigable water. But here we see that Noah was obedient even though God’s instructions were hard to understand. This is one of the secrets of success in any recovery program. We may not understand how everything works, but we must do what God tells us is necessary for a successful recovery. When we step out in faith, as Noah did, God will give us the success we seek.

**8:1** Noah had listened to God and obeyed all his requests. But now the boat was floating over the earth on the floodwaters—not an ideal situation to be in. But God didn’t forget about Noah. It is comforting to know that when we obey God, he will not forget us. He will stand by us until his plans for us are complete.



# NOAH & SONS

Parents often wonder if they can have a positive effect on their children in our corrupt world. Noah leaves us with a good model of what a godly parent should be like. Noah was the only righteous man left in a generation of corrupt individuals. He led his family by example in a world that looked upon Noah as being “out of touch.” Society mocked him for his belief in and obedience to God.

The principles of obedience to God, consistency, and patience were taught to Noah’s sons and their wives. When judgment came upon the world, Noah, his wife, his sons, and their wives were spared. The Bible tells us that later in his life, after the Flood, Noah became drunk on the wine of his vineyard. Two of his sons (Shem and Japheth) responded to the situation in a godly manner while one (Ham) did not. Noah’s drunkenness and Ham’s subsequent indiscretion resulted in the suffering of some of Ham’s descendants.

As we look at Noah’s life, we are reminded that our children learn from our examples. They often receive great blessings from the good things we do, but they also suffer from our mistakes. Like Noah, all of us have made mistakes. But those mistakes can become insignificant through our repentance and obedience to God’s Word. We must remember that children become like the adults who surround them.

## STRENGTHS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Noah was the only follower of God left in his generation.
- Noah was the second father of the human race.
- Noah taught his sons patience, consistency, and obedience to God.

## WEAKNESSES AND MISTAKES:

- Noah embarrassed himself by getting drunk in front of his sons.
- Ham acted in an ungodly manner, which resulted in a curse upon some of his descendants.

## LESSONS FROM THEIR LIVES:

- God is faithful to those who trust and obey him.
- Obedience to God is a lifelong commitment.
- Good parents teach their children by example.

## KEY VERSE:

“So Noah did everything exactly as God had commanded him” (Genesis 6:22).

The story of Noah and his sons is told in Genesis 5:29–10:32. Noah is referred to in 1 Chronicles 1:4; Isaiah 54:9; Ezekiel 14:14, 20; Matthew 24:37–38; Luke 3:36; 17:26–27; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:20; and 2 Peter 2:5.

sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives. <sup>14</sup>With them in the boat were pairs of every kind of breathing animal—domestic and wild, large and small—along with birds and flying insects of every kind. <sup>15</sup>Two by two they came into the boat, <sup>16</sup>male and female, just as God had commanded. Then the LORD shut them in.

<sup>17</sup>For forty days the floods prevailed, covering the ground and lifting the boat high above the earth. <sup>18</sup>As the waters rose higher and higher above the ground, the boat floated safely on the surface. <sup>19</sup>Finally, the water covered even the highest mountains on the earth, <sup>20</sup>standing more than twenty-two feet\* above the highest peaks. <sup>21</sup>All the living things on earth died—birds, domestic animals, wild animals, all kinds of small animals, and all the people. <sup>22</sup>Everything died that breathed and lived on dry land. <sup>23</sup>Every living thing on the earth was wiped out—people, animals both large and small,

and birds. They were all destroyed, and only Noah was left alive, along with those who were with him in the boat. <sup>24</sup>And the water covered the earth for 150 days.

## CHAPTER 8

### The Flood Recedes

But God remembered Noah and all the animals in the boat. He sent a wind to blow across the waters, and the floods began to disappear. <sup>2</sup>The underground water sources ceased their gushing, and the torrential rains stopped. <sup>3</sup>So the flood gradually began to recede. After 150 days, <sup>4</sup>exactly five months from the time the flood began,\* the boat came to rest on the mountains of Ararat. <sup>5</sup>Two and a half months later,\* as the waters continued to go down, other mountain peaks began to appear.

<sup>6</sup>After another forty days, Noah opened the window he had made in the boat <sup>7</sup>and released a raven that flew back and forth until

**7:20** Hebrew 15 cubits [6.8 meters]. **8:4** Hebrew on the seventeenth day of the seventh month; see 7:11. **8:5** Hebrew On the first day of the tenth month; see 7:11 and note on 8:4.

the earth was dry. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent out a dove to see if it could find dry ground. <sup>9</sup>But the dove found no place to land because the water was still too high. So it returned to the boat, and Noah held out his hand and drew the dove back inside. <sup>10</sup>Seven days later, Noah released the dove again. <sup>11</sup>This time, toward evening, the bird returned to him with a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Noah now knew that the water was almost gone. <sup>12</sup>A week later, he released the dove again, and this time it did not come back.

<sup>13</sup>Finally, when Noah was 601 years old, ten and a half months after the flood began,\* Noah lifted back the cover to look. The water was drying up. <sup>14</sup>Two more months went by,\* and at last the earth was dry! <sup>15</sup>Then God said to Noah, <sup>16</sup>“Leave the boat, all of you. <sup>17</sup>Release all the animals and birds so they can breed and reproduce in great numbers.” <sup>18</sup>So Noah, his wife, and his sons and their wives left the boat. <sup>19</sup>And all the various kinds of animals and birds came out, pair by pair.

<sup>20</sup>Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and sacrificed on it the animals and birds that had been approved for that purpose. <sup>21</sup>And the LORD was pleased with the sacrifice and said to himself, “I will never again curse the earth, destroying all living things, even though people’s thoughts and actions are bent toward evil from childhood. <sup>22</sup>As long as the earth remains, there will be springtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, day and night.”

## CHAPTER 9

### God’s Covenant with Noah

God blessed Noah and his sons and told them, “Multiply and fill the earth. <sup>2</sup>All the wild animals, large and small, and all the birds and fish will be afraid of you. I have placed them in your power. <sup>3</sup>I have given them to you for food, just as I have given you grain and vegetables. <sup>4</sup>But you must never eat animals that still have their lifeblood in

them. <sup>5</sup>And murder is forbidden. Animals that kill people must die, and any person who murders must be killed. <sup>6</sup>Yes, you must execute anyone who murders another person, for to kill a person is to kill a living being made in God’s image. <sup>7</sup>Now you must have many children and repopulate the earth. Yes, multiply and fill the earth!”

<sup>8</sup>Then God told Noah and his sons, <sup>9</sup>“I am making a covenant with you and your descendants, <sup>10</sup>and with the animals you brought with you—all these birds and livestock and wild animals. <sup>11</sup>I solemnly promise never to send another flood to kill all living creatures and destroy the earth.” <sup>12</sup>And God said, “I am giving you a sign as evidence of my eternal covenant with you and all living creatures. <sup>13</sup>I have placed my rainbow in the clouds. It is the sign of my permanent promise to you and to all the earth. <sup>14</sup>When I send clouds over the earth, the rainbow will be seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>and I will remember my covenant with you and with everything that lives. Never again will there be a flood that will destroy all life. <sup>16</sup>When I see the rainbow in the clouds, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth.” <sup>17</sup>Then God said to Noah, “Yes, this is the sign of my covenant with all the creatures of the earth.”

### Noah’s Sons

<sup>18</sup>Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah, survived the Flood with their father. (Ham is the ancestor of the Canaanites.) <sup>19</sup>From these three sons of Noah came all the people now scattered across the earth.

<sup>20</sup>After the Flood, Noah became a farmer and planted a vineyard. <sup>21</sup>One day he became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent. <sup>22</sup>Ham, the father of Canaan, saw that his father was naked and went outside and told his brothers. <sup>23</sup>Shem and Japheth took a robe, held it over their shoulders, walked backward into the tent, and covered their father’s naked body. As

**8:13** Hebrew on the first day of the first month; see 7:11. **8:14** Hebrew The twenty-seventh day of the second month arrived; see note on 8:13.

**9:1-17** Noah and his family were the only people left after the Flood. The comforts of civilization had been washed away. They had to start all over again. God gave Noah his special blessing and instituted a program that, if followed, would result in a healthy society. God has given us his Word, which contains the ultimate blueprint for healthy living. And just as God gave the human race a new start with Noah, he can give each of us a new start, too.

**9:20-21** Since the Bible talks so much about Noah’s righteousness and his fellowship with God, it is surprising to read that he gave in to the excesses of alcohol. The account of Noah’s drunkenness and shame comes as a shock to us, but it is a reminder that even in ideal conditions it is easy for us to slip and fall. We can never completely let down our guard or feel as if we have it made, for that is when we become most vulnerable to failure.



they did this, they looked the other way so they wouldn't see him naked. <sup>24</sup>When Noah woke up from his drunken stupor, he learned what Ham, his youngest son, had done. <sup>25</sup>Then he cursed the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham:

"A curse on the Canaanites!  
May they be the lowest of servants  
to the descendants of Shem and  
Japheth."

<sup>26</sup>Then Noah said,

"May Shem be blessed by the LORD my  
God;  
and may Canaan be his servant.

<sup>27</sup>May God enlarge the territory of Japheth,  
and may he share the prosperity of  
Shem;\*  
and let Canaan be his servant."

<sup>28</sup>Noah lived another 350 years after the Flood. <sup>29</sup>He was 950 years old when he died.

## CHAPTER 10

This is the history of the families of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the three sons of Noah. Many children were born to them after the Flood.

### Descendants of Japheth

<sup>2</sup>The descendants of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

<sup>3</sup>The descendants of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

<sup>4</sup>The descendants of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.\* <sup>5</sup>Their descendants became the seafaring peoples in various lands, each tribe with its own language.

### Descendants of Ham

<sup>6</sup>The descendants of Ham were Cush, Mizraim,\* Put, and Canaan.

<sup>7</sup>The descendants of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

**9:27** Hebrew *may he live in the tents of Shem*. **10:4** As in some Hebrew manuscripts and Greek version (see also 1 Chr 1:7); most Hebrew manuscripts read *Dodanim*. **10:6** Or *Egypt*; also in 10:13. **10:9** Hebrew *a mighty hunter before the LORD*; also in 10:9b. **10:10** Hebrew *Shinar*. **10:14** Hebrew *Casluhites, from whom the Philistines came, Caphtorites*. Compare Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7. **10:21** Or *Shem, whose older brother was Japheth*. **10:24** Greek version reads *Arphaxad was the father of Cainan, Cainan was the father of Shelah*.

<sup>8</sup>One of Cush's descendants was Nimrod, who became a heroic warrior. <sup>9</sup>He was a mighty hunter in the LORD's sight.\* His name became proverbial, and people would speak of someone as being "like Nimrod, a mighty hunter in the LORD's sight." <sup>10</sup>He built the foundation for his empire in the land of Babylonia,\* with the cities of Babel, Erech, Akkad, and Calneh. <sup>11</sup>From there he extended his reign to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth-ir, Calah, <sup>12</sup>and Resen—the main city of the empire, located between Nineveh and Calah. <sup>13</sup>Mizraim was the ancestor of the Ludites, Anamites, Lehabites, Naphtuhites, <sup>14</sup>Path-risites, Casluhites, and the Caphtorites, from whom the Philistines came.\* <sup>15</sup>Canaan's oldest son was Sidon, the ancestor of the Sidonians. Canaan was also the ancestor of the Hittites, <sup>16</sup>Jebusites, Amorites, Girgashites, <sup>17</sup>Hivites, Arkites, Sinites, <sup>18</sup>Arvadites, Zemarites, and Hamathites. <sup>19</sup>Eventually the territory of Canaan spread from Sidon to Gerar, near Gaza, and to Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha.

<sup>20</sup>These were the descendants of Ham, identified according to their tribes, languages, territories, and nations.

### Descendants of Shem

<sup>21</sup>Sons were also born to Shem, the older brother of Japheth.\* Shem was the ancestor of all the descendants of Eber.

<sup>22</sup>The descendants of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

<sup>23</sup>The descendants of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

<sup>24</sup>Arphaxad was the father of Shelah,\* and Shelah was the father of Eber. <sup>25</sup>Eber had two sons. The first was named Peleg—"division"—for during his lifetime the people of the world were divided into different language groups and dispersed. His brother's name was Joktan.

<sup>26</sup>Joktan was the ancestor of Almodad,

**10:1-32** This chapter is often called the Table of Nations. It is refreshing to realize that the God we worship is not a local deity. He is sovereign over all ethnic and language groups, nations, and political entities. The God who holds kings and empires in his hands surely has the power to hold us, too.

Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, <sup>27</sup>Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, <sup>28</sup>Obal, Abimael, Sheba, <sup>29</sup>Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab.

<sup>30</sup>The descendants of Joktan lived in the area extending from Mesha toward the eastern hills of Sephar.

<sup>31</sup>These were the descendants of Shem, identified according to their tribes, languages, territories, and nations.

<sup>32</sup>These are the families that came from Noah's sons, listed nation by nation according to their lines of descent. The earth was populated with the people of these nations after the Flood.

## CHAPTER 11

### The Tower of Babel

At one time the whole world spoke a single language and used the same words. <sup>2</sup>As the people migrated eastward, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia\* and settled there. <sup>3</sup>They began to talk about construction projects. "Come," they said, "let's make great piles of burnt brick and collect natural asphalt to use as mortar. <sup>4</sup>Let's build a great city with a tower that reaches to the skies—a monument to our greatness! This will bring us together and keep us from scattering all over the world."

<sup>5</sup>But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. <sup>6</sup>"Look!" he said. "If they can accomplish this when they have just begun to take advantage of their common language and political unity, just think of what they will do later. Nothing will be impossible for them! <sup>7</sup>Come, let's go down and give them different

languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other."

<sup>8</sup>In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the earth; and that ended the building of the city. <sup>9</sup>That is why the city was called Babel,\* because it was there that the LORD confused the people by giving them many languages, thus scattering them across the earth.

### From Shem to Abram

<sup>10</sup>This is the history of Shem's family.

When Shem was 100 years old, his son Arphaxad was born. This happened two years after the Flood. <sup>11</sup>After the birth of Arphaxad, Shem lived another 500 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>12</sup>When Arphaxad was 35 years old, his son Shelah was born.\* <sup>13</sup>After the birth of Shelah, Arphaxad lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.\*

<sup>14</sup>When Shelah was 30 years old, his son Eber was born. <sup>15</sup>After the birth of Eber, Shelah lived another 403 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>16</sup>When Eber was 34 years old, his son Peleg was born. <sup>17</sup>After the birth of Peleg, Eber lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>18</sup>When Peleg was 30 years old, his son Reu was born. <sup>19</sup>After the birth of Reu, Peleg lived another 209 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>20</sup>When Reu was 32 years old, his son Serug was born. <sup>21</sup>After the birth of Serug, Reu lived another 207 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>22</sup>When Serug was 30 years old, his son Nahor was born. <sup>23</sup>After the birth of Nahor,

**11:2** Hebrew *Shinar*. **11:9** *Babel* sounds like a Hebrew term that means "confusion." **11:12** Or *his son, the ancestor of Shelah, was born*; similarly in 11:14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24. **11:12-13** Greek version reads <sup>12</sup>*When Arphaxad was 135 years old, his son Cainan was born. <sup>13</sup>After the birth of Cainan, Arphaxad lived another 430 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died. When Cainan was 130 years old, his son Shelah was born. After the birth of Shelah, Cainan lived another 330 years and had other sons and daughters, and then he died.*

**11:3-4** Whatever else the Tower of Babel might have represented, it was a mighty monument to human pride. It was a symbol of man's rebellion against the revealed will of God. This type of pride is always destructive to human community and to the process of recovery.

**11:5-9** The Tower of Babel incident records the progression of broken communication that began back in the Garden of Eden. After sin entered the world, Adam and Eve began to hide the truth. They tried to blame each other and God for their mistakes, which resulted in separation from God and barriers between that first couple. The sinful pride of the people of Babel caused another great rift in human communication. Numerous languages now divided them into various groups, making their cooperation difficult if not impossible. But the story doesn't end there. God is in the business of restoring broken communication. He chose the people of Israel and spoke to them, giving them his laws. His Son was born through this nation, so he could speak to us and walk among us. And when the Holy Spirit came, the diversity of language was no longer a barrier to communication (Acts 2:5-12). God's program is designed to enhance our communication with him and with the people around us.



# ABRAHAM & SARAH

Many give lip service to walking by faith; Abraham and Sarah modeled it. They were imperfect but willing instruments used by God to implement his perfect plan.

Abram, with Sarai, departed by faith from a pagan world for a new life of God's choosing. God promised a land and a nation of descendants, including One through whom all the peoples of the world would be blessed. The covenant defied human logic: Abram was seventy-five; Sarai was ten years younger and infertile. Their hopes of having children had long vanished. Yet Abram believed God's promises.

During their pilgrimage, the pair often strayed from God's will. They succumbed to fear and dishonesty in dealings with Pharaoh and Abimelech. Difficulty in persevering led them to second-guess God. Abram's subsequent union with Hagar resulted in domestic strife. Jealousy naturally erupted, and family relationships became strained. Abram behaved irresponsibly, and Sarai acted with deliberate cruelty. Years later a wiser Abraham would listen to God's instructions for handling the handmaid Hagar and her son.

Abram's and Sarai's failures neither diminished God's love for them nor altered his commitment to his promises. Through turmoil and temptation, the couple's mutual affection and respect for each other survived. Eventually God changed their names. Sarah's faith grew, and a quarter-century after God's promises were first given, she bore a son. They named him Isaac. The delayed gratification must have been sweet! Sarah enjoyed Isaac for many years. After her death she was tenderly mourned by both husband and son.

Worship and obedience were such a part of Abraham's life that when God tested Abraham's faith, he willingly surrendered his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Then God provided a lamb as a burnt offering to take Isaac's place on the altar. God's provision in Abraham's life can bring hope to us even today.

## STRENGTHS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- They voluntarily left comfortable, familiar surroundings in obedience to God's will.
- Scripture heralds both as examples of faithful obedience.
- Abraham's physical descendants include the Jewish nation, from which came Jesus the Messiah.
- Abraham's spiritual descendants include all who have trusted Jesus for salvation.

## WEAKNESSES AND MISTAKES:

- They at times presumed to know God's plans before he revealed them and foolishly attempted to assist him.
- When victimized by fear, Abraham was not above protecting himself at the expense of his wife's safety and integrity.
- Both acted intolerably toward Hagar and her son.

## LESSONS FROM THEIR LIVES:

- A fresh start is possible at any stage of life.
- The fulfillment of God's promises does not depend upon our performance but upon his grace.
- It is dangerous to move ahead without first seeking God's direction.

## KEY VERSES:

"Then the LORD did exactly what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant, and she gave a son to Abraham in his old age" (Genesis 21:1-2).

The story of Abraham and Sarah is found in Genesis 11-25. Among the many other references to Abraham are Romans 4:1-24; 9:7-9; Galatians 3:6-9, 14, 18; Hebrews 6:13-15; 7:1-2, 4-6; 11:8-12, 17-19; James 2:21-23. Sarah is mentioned in Romans 4:19; 9:9; Hebrews 11:11; and 1 Peter 3:6.

Serug lived another 200 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>24</sup>When Nahor was 29 years old, his son Terah was born. <sup>25</sup>After the birth of Terah, Nahor lived another 119 years and had other sons and daughters.

<sup>26</sup>When Terah was 70 years old, he became the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

## The Family of Terah

<sup>27</sup>This is the history of Terah's family. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran;

and Haran had a son named Lot. <sup>28</sup>But while Haran was still young, he died in Ur of the Chaldeans, the place of his birth. He was survived by Terah, his father. <sup>29</sup>Meanwhile, Abram married Sarai, and his brother Nahor married Milcah, the daughter of their brother Haran. (Milcah had a sister named Iscah.) <sup>30</sup>Now Sarai was not able to have any children.

<sup>31</sup>Terah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai, and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and left Ur of the Chaldeans to

go to the land of Canaan. But they stopped instead at the village of Haran and settled there. <sup>32</sup>Terah lived for 205 years\* and died while still at Haran.

## CHAPTER 12

### The Call of Abram

Then the LORD told Abram, “Leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s house, and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you.”

<sup>4</sup>So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. <sup>5</sup>He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people who had joined his household at Haran—and finally arrived in Canaan. <sup>6</sup>Traveling through Canaan, they came to a place near Shechem and set up camp beside the oak at Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

<sup>7</sup>Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I am going to give this land to your offspring.\*” And Abram built an altar there to commemorate the LORD’s visit. <sup>8</sup>After that, Abram traveled southward and set up camp in the hill country between Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar and worshiped the LORD. <sup>9</sup>Then Abram traveled south by stages toward the Negev.

**11:32** Some ancient versions read *145 years*; compare 11:26; 12:4. **12:7** Hebrew *seed*.

### Abram and Sarai in Egypt

<sup>10</sup>At that time there was a severe famine in the land, so Abram went down to Egypt to wait it out. <sup>11</sup>As he was approaching the borders of Egypt, Abram said to Sarai, “You are a very beautiful woman. <sup>12</sup>When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife. Let’s kill him; then we can have her!’ <sup>13</sup>But if you say you are my sister, then the Egyptians will treat me well because of their interest in you, and they will spare my life.”

<sup>14</sup>And sure enough, when they arrived in Egypt, everyone spoke of her beauty. <sup>15</sup>When the palace officials saw her, they sang her praises to their king, the pharaoh, and she was taken into his harem. <sup>16</sup>Then Pharaoh gave Abram many gifts because of her—sheep, cattle, donkeys, male and female servants, and camels.

<sup>17</sup>But the LORD sent a terrible plague upon Pharaoh’s household because of Sarai, Abram’s wife. <sup>18</sup>So Pharaoh called for Abram and accused him sharply. “What is this you have done to me?” he demanded. “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? <sup>19</sup>Why were you willing to let me marry her, saying she was your sister? Here is your wife! Take her and be gone!” <sup>20</sup>Pharaoh then sent them out of the country under armed escort—Abram and his wife, with all their household and belongings.

## CHAPTER 13

### Abram and Lot Separate

So they left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev—Abram with his wife and Lot and all that they owned, <sup>2</sup>for Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold. <sup>3</sup>Then they con-

**12:1** A relationship with God is a two-way street. He is there to help us, but he expects us to follow his plan. When God called Abram to leave his country and his people and go to a land that God would show him, God promised to guide him. But Abram had to step out in faith. God has promised to be with us as we seek his help in recovery, but he may also ask something of us. As with Abram, God may call us away from the familiar world that drags us down. And if we want to progress, we will need to follow his plan.

**12:11-20** As Abram and Sarai approached Egypt, Abram began to fear that the Egyptians would kill him so they could take his beautiful wife. So Abram and Sarai spun a lie to “protect” their relationship; they said that they were brother and sister. This was a half-truth—they actually were half siblings. But it should be recognized that a half-truth is a whole lie. And like most lies, this one backfired, almost destroying Abram and Sarai’s marriage. Total honesty is an essential part of recovery. We need to be careful to avoid doing what Abram and Sarai did, even though they did it with the best of intentions. Dishonesty never pays—we should never try to rationalize it.

**13:5-11** A conflict developed between the families of Abram and Lot over pastureland for their flocks. To ease the strained family relationship, Abram offered Lot first choice of the land. Abram realized that people were more important than possessions, so he sacrificed his own right to the best land to maintain harmony between their families. In recovery, we need to learn this important lesson: Our relationships are more important than the things we own.



# LOT & FAMILY

Many people in this world live for wealth, comfort, and the easy life. And they want to get it as quickly as possible! To make this happen, they often sacrifice the really important things in life. This was true in the life of Abraham's nephew Lot. Looking for the easy road to wealth and comfort, he made decisions that ended up destroying everything he had lived for.

Lot always thought of himself first. He demonstrated this when he chose the rich pastureland of the valleys, leaving Abraham with the rugged hill country. Embracing the easy comforts of the valley's cities and the physical prosperity they offered, he grew blind to the legacy he was leaving his descendants. When the men of Sodom demanded that Lot send his angelic guests out to take part in their sexual practices, Lot offered his daughters as an alternative. His desire to be accepted by the sinful people of his adopted homeland led him to fail to treat his daughters with the respect and protection they deserved.

The result of Lot's selfishness and greed was the loss of his fortune and the ruin of his family. He sacrificed his family and all he had worked for to the gods of comfort and wealth. He witnessed his wife's death as a result of her disobedience to God—something he had modeled for her. His daughters followed Lot's example, too. They used the quickest and easiest means available to overcome their lonely and childless state—drunkenness, seduction, and incest.

Our society places great value on wealth, comfort, and success, calling us all to join the mad rush to get them. This focus is so pervasive that it may be hard for us to see it as bad. Even though living for wealth may not seem such a terrible sin, its destructive effects upon people in our world are widespread. We must learn to put God first. If we put wealth first, we are setting ourselves up to lose all the really important things in life—our family and our relationship with God.

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tinued traveling by stages toward Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where they had camped before. <sup>4</sup>This was the place where Abram had built the altar, and there he again worshiped the LORD.

<sup>5</sup>Now Lot, who was traveling with Abram, was also very wealthy with sheep, cattle, and many tents. <sup>6</sup>But the land could not support both Abram and Lot with all their flocks and herds living so close together. There were too many animals for the available pastureland. <sup>7</sup>So an argument broke out between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. At

that time Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land.

<sup>8</sup>Then Abram talked it over with Lot. "This arguing between our herdsmen has got to stop," he said. "After all, we are close relatives! I'll tell you what we'll do. Take your choice of any section of the land you want, and we will separate. If you want that area over there, then I'll stay here. If you want to stay in this area, then I'll move on to another place."

<sup>10</sup>Lot took a long look at the fertile plains of the Jordan Valley in the direction of Zoar.

## STRENGTHS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Lot was successful at generating wealth.
- The apostle Peter referred to him as a just and righteous man.

## WEAKNESSES AND MISTAKES:

- Lot often chose the easiest course of action, usually at the expense of doing what was right.
- When faced with making a decision, Lot thought of himself first.
- Lot's daughters used sinful means to meet their needs, instead of seeking God's provision.

## LESSONS FROM THEIR LIVES:

- If we live for comfort and wealth, they can come between us and our families.
- We need to take care of our responsibilities to God and people first if we want our lives to be successful.
- Mistakes made by parents usually lead to mistakes made by their children.
- When we put wealth and comfort before obedience to God, the result will be destructive.

## KEY VERSE:

"Come, let's get [Lot] drunk with wine, and then we will sleep with him. That way we will preserve our family line through our father" (Genesis 19:32).

The story of Lot and his family is told in Genesis 13 and 19. Lot is also mentioned in Deuteronomy 2:9; Luke 17:28-32; and 2 Peter 2:7-8.

The whole area was well watered everywhere, like the garden of the LORD or the beautiful land of Egypt. (This was before the LORD had destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

<sup>11</sup>Lot chose that land for himself—the Jordan Valley to the east of them. He went there with his flocks and servants and parted company with his uncle Abram. <sup>12</sup>So while Abram stayed in the land of Canaan, Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom, among the cities of the plain. <sup>13</sup>The people of this area were unusually wicked and sinned greatly against the LORD.

<sup>14</sup>After Lot was gone, the LORD said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction. <sup>15</sup>I am going to give all this land to you and your offspring\* as a permanent possession. <sup>16</sup>And I am going to give you so many descendants that, like dust, they cannot be counted! <sup>17</sup>Take a walk in every direction and explore the new possessions I am giving you.” <sup>18</sup>Then Abram moved his camp to the oak grove owned by Mamre, which is at Hebron. There he built an altar to the LORD.

#### CHAPTER 14

##### **Abram Rescues Lot**

About this time war broke out in the region. King Amraphel of Babylonia,\* King Arioch of Ellasar, King Kedorlaomer of Elam, and King Tidal of Goiim <sup>2</sup>fought against King Bera of Sodom, King Birsha of Gomorrah, King Shinab of Admah, King Shemeber of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (now called Zoar).

<sup>3</sup>The kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela formed an alliance and mobilized their armies in Siddim Valley (that is, the valley of the Dead Sea\*). <sup>4</sup>For twelve years they had all been subject to King Kedorlaomer, but now in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

<sup>5</sup>One year later, Kedorlaomer and his allies arrived. They conquered the Rephaites in Ashteroth-karnaim, the Zuzites in Ham, the Emities in the plain of Kiriathaim, <sup>6</sup>and the

Horites in Mount Seir, as far as El-paran at the edge of the wilderness. <sup>7</sup>Then they swung around to En-mishpat (now called Kadesh) and destroyed the Amalekites, and also the Amorites living in Hazazon-tamar.

<sup>8</sup>But now the army of the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (now called Zoar) prepared for battle in the valley of the Dead Sea\* <sup>9</sup>against King Kedorlaomer of Elam and the kings of Goiim, Babylonia, and Ellasar—four kings against five. <sup>10</sup>As it happened, the valley was filled with tar pits. And as the army of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some slipped into the tar pits, while the rest escaped into the mountains. <sup>11</sup>The victorious invaders then plundered Sodom and Gomorrah and began their long journey home, taking all the wealth and food with them. <sup>12</sup>They also captured Lot—Abram’s nephew who lived in Sodom—and took everything he owned. <sup>13</sup>One of the men who escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, who was camped at the oak grove belonging to Mamre the Amorite. Mamre and his relatives, Eshcol and Aner, were Abram’s allies.

<sup>14</sup>When Abram learned that Lot had been captured, he called together the men born into his household, 318 of them in all. He chased after Kedorlaomer’s army until he caught up with them in Dan. <sup>15</sup>There he divided his men and attacked during the night from several directions. Kedorlaomer’s army fled, but Abram chased them to Hobah, north of Damascus. <sup>16</sup>Abram and his allies recovered everything—the goods that had been taken, Abram’s nephew Lot with his possessions, and all the women and other captives.

##### **Melchizedek Blesses Abram**

<sup>17</sup>As Abram returned from his victory over Kedorlaomer and his allies, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). <sup>18</sup>Then Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought him bread and

**13:15** Hebrew *seed*. **14:1** Hebrew *Shinar*; also in 14:9. **14:3** Hebrew *Salt Sea*. **14:8** Hebrew in *Siddim Valley*; see 14:3.

**13:11-13** One bad choice often leads to another. The choices Lot made here and in the following chapters led him toward his eventual fall. Here, he selfishly chose the best land and the easy lifestyle that would come with it. In 13:12-13, he chose to move closer to the wicked city of Sodom. In 19:1-18, he chose to become an important man in a wicked place. In 19:30-38, Lot’s descent reached its final depths as he had incestuous relations with his daughters. We need to think ahead, reflecting upon the probable consequences of our present decisions.

**14:14-16** A number of important character traits emerge as we examine Abram’s prompt military action. He proved himself to be a man of courage, always ready to act when the situation demanded it. He was willing to give up certain luxuries in order to follow the program God had laid out for him. These are important characteristics for us to emulate as we continue in the recovery process.



# HAGAR & ISHMAEL

Hagar is often overshadowed by the two prominent people in her life—Abraham and Sarah. Her story is woven into the fabric of great events that make up Abraham’s life. Yet God chose this “insignificant” woman to bear the son who was destined to be the father of the Arab nations.

When Hagar became pregnant, she gave in to pride and looked down on her mistress, Sarai, who had been unable to bear children. This prompted a great deal of strife in Abraham’s family and much suffering for Hagar. The pain and alienation she suffered because of the baby and her wrong attitude could have put considerable strain on the mother-child relationship from the beginning. But Hagar showed no regrets about having her son. She joyfully received him and accepted him despite the complicated and emotionally charged circumstances surrounding his birth.

Hagar and her son, Ishmael, had much in common. They were both rejected by Abraham’s household. Together they experienced the torture of the hot, barren desert after Sarai demanded that Abraham send them away. They became nameless outcasts, discarded by those who had once valued them. Under such circumstances, it must have been difficult to maintain a positive self-assessment.

Yet this mother and son persevered through these trials because they had faith in God, who had appeared to them in the wilderness. They knew that they were of great worth in his sight, and they rebuilt their identity upon his promises. To this day their story is used to illustrate God’s deep concern for all who have been discarded and rejected. It also shows us that God’s assessment of our life is far more important than what other people think.

## STRENGTHS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Hagar was willing to humbly return to Sarai even though she had been badly mistreated.
- Hagar stood by her son even though he was the source of many of her trials.

## WEAKNESSES AND MISTAKES:

- When Hagar became pregnant, she looked down on Sarai with contempt, prompting much of the strife that followed.
- Hagar momentarily abandoned her son in the shade of a bush at the time of his greatest need.

## LESSONS FROM THEIR LIVES:

- A loving mother/child relationship is a precious gift from God.
- God is deeply concerned about those who have been abused and rejected.
- God is able to restore a sense of self-worth even in the most trying times.

## KEY VERSES:

“Then the angel of the LORD said, ‘Return to your mistress and submit to her authority.’ The angel added, ‘I will give you more descendants than you can count.’ And the angel also said, ‘You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard about your misery.’” (Genesis 16:9-11).

The story of Hagar and Ishmael is told in Genesis 16–21. The apostle Paul briefly discusses them in Galatians 4:21-31.

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wine. <sup>19</sup>Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing:

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.

<sup>20</sup>And blessed be God Most High, who has helped you conquer your enemies.”

Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

<sup>21</sup>The king of Sodom told him, “Give back my people who were captured. But you may keep for yourself all the goods you have recovered.”

<sup>22</sup>Abram replied, “I have solemnly promised the LORD, God Most High, Creator of

heaven and earth, <sup>23</sup>that I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from you. Otherwise you might say, ‘I am the one who made Abram rich!’ <sup>24</sup>All I’ll accept is what these young men of mine have already eaten. But give a share of the goods to my allies—Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre.”

## CHAPTER 15

### The LORD’s Covenant with Abram

Afterward the LORD spoke to Abram in a vision and said to him, “Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you, and your reward will be great.”

<sup>2</sup>But Abram replied, “O Sovereign LORD, what good are all your blessings when I don’t

even have a son? Since I don't have a son, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit all my wealth. <sup>3</sup>You have given me no children, so one of my servants will have to be my heir."

<sup>4</sup>Then the LORD said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own to inherit everything I am giving you." <sup>5</sup>Then the LORD brought Abram outside beneath the night sky and told him, "Look up into the heavens and count the stars if you can. Your descendants will be like that—too many to count!" <sup>6</sup>And Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD declared him righteous because of his faith. <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD told him, "I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land."

<sup>8</sup>But Abram replied, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I be sure that you will give it to me?"

<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD told him, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup>Abram took all these and killed them. He cut each one down the middle and laid the halves side by side. He did not, however, divide the birds in half. <sup>11</sup>Some vultures came down to eat the carcasses, but Abram chased them away. <sup>12</sup>That evening, as the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep. He saw a terrifying vision of darkness and horror.

<sup>13</sup>Then the LORD told Abram, "You can be sure that your descendants will be strangers

in a foreign land, and they will be oppressed as slaves for four hundred years. <sup>14</sup>But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and in the end they will come away with great wealth. <sup>15</sup>(But you will die in peace, at a ripe old age.) <sup>16</sup>After four generations your descendants will return here to this land, when the sin of the Amorites has run its course."

<sup>17</sup>As the sun went down and it became dark, Abram saw a smoking firepot and a flaming torch pass between the halves of the carcasses. <sup>18</sup>So the LORD made a covenant with Abram that day and said, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt\* to the great Euphrates River—<sup>19</sup>the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup>Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, <sup>21</sup>Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites."

## CHAPTER 16

### The Birth of Ishmael

But Sarai, Abram's wife, had no children. So Sarai took her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, <sup>2</sup>and gave her to Abram so she could bear his children. "The LORD has kept me from having any children," Sarai said to Abram. "Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed. <sup>3</sup>So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram first arrived in the land of Canaan.)

**15:18** Hebrew *the river of Egypt*, referring either to an eastern branch of the Nile River or to the brook of Egypt in the Sinai (see Num 34:5).

**15:4-5** Because of the disappointment and frustration of seventy-five childless years, God's promise of numerous children must have stretched Abram's faith to the very limit. God's plan for Abram seemed an impossibility—thousands of descendants from an old man and a barren woman! But God's promise did actually come about. God's plans for us may seem beyond belief—even impossible. We may think we are beyond hope. But with God, nothing is impossible!

**15:6** This is one of the most important verses in the Old Testament. Abram believed God, and God declared him righteous. In other words, it was Abram's faith, not his works, that made him righteous before God. For us to continue in recovery, we need to trust God more and trust our works less. We are powerless over the pressures of sin, but God will help us through the toughest temptations if we trust him. He will count us righteous because of our trust in him, not because we are perfect.

**16:1-4** Since God's promise of a child had been given, about two years had passed without anything happening. Sometimes the hardest part of recovery is the waiting. Here Abram and Sarai show us what *not* to do when things don't progress as quickly as we might hope. Rather than accept God's timing, they took matters into their own hands. They assigned a servant girl, Hagar, to be a surrogate mother for Abram's son. This "solution" has been a source of conflict to this day. Abram's descendants through Hagar are the Arab nations whose conflicts with the Jews keep the Middle East in constant turmoil.

**16:7-13** When Hagar could not help herself and recognized her powerlessness over her situation, the angel of the Lord came and ministered to her. Until we recognize that our situation is hopeless without outside help, God waits and does not help us. But when we are ready to admit our need and cry out to him, he is ready to step in.



<sup>4</sup>So Abram slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant. When Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress Sarai with contempt. <sup>5</sup>Then Sarai said to Abram, "It's all your fault! Now this servant of mine is pregnant, and she despises me, though I myself gave her the privilege of sleeping with you. The LORD will make you pay for doing this to me!"\*

<sup>6</sup>Abram replied, "Since she is your servant, you may deal with her as you see fit." So Sarai treated her harshly, and Hagar ran away.

<sup>7</sup>The angel of the LORD found Hagar beside a desert spring along the road to Shur. <sup>8</sup>The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I am running away from my mistress," she replied.

<sup>9</sup>Then the angel of the LORD said, "Return to your mistress and submit to her authority." <sup>10</sup>The angel added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count." <sup>11</sup>And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael,\* for the LORD has heard about your misery. <sup>12</sup>This son of yours will be a wild one—free and untamed as a wild donkey! He will be against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live at odds with the rest of his brothers."

<sup>13</sup>Thereafter, Hagar referred to the LORD, who had spoken to her, as "the God who sees me,"\* for she said, "I have seen the One who sees me!" <sup>14</sup>Later that well was named Beer-lahairoi,\* and it can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

<sup>15</sup>So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. <sup>16</sup>Abram was eighty-six years old at that time.

## CHAPTER 17

### Abram Is Named Abraham

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. <sup>2</sup>I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to make you into a mighty nation." <sup>3</sup>At this, Abram fell face down in the dust. Then God said to him, <sup>4</sup>"This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of not just one nation, but a multitude of nations! <sup>5</sup>What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer

**16:5** Hebrew *Let the LORD judge between you and me.*

**16:11** *Ishmael* means "God hears." **16:13** Hebrew *El-roi*.

**16:14** *Beer-lahairoi* means "well of the Living One who sees me."

► **The Twelve Step devotional reading plan begins here.**



### No-Win Situations

BIBLE READING: Genesis 16:1-15

**We admitted that we were powerless over our dependencies—that our lives had become unmanageable.**

Sometimes we are powerless because of our stations in life. We may be in a situation where other people have power over us. We may feel that we are trapped by the demands of others and that there's no way to please them all. It's a double bind: To please one is to disappoint another. Sometimes when we feel stuck and frustrated with our relationships, we look for a measure of control by escaping through our addictive behaviors.

Hagar is a picture of powerlessness. She had no rights. As a girl, she was a slave to Sarai and Abram. When they were upset because Sarai could not bear children, Hagar was given to Abram as a surrogate. When she did become pregnant, as they had wanted, Sarai was so jealous that she beat Hagar, and Hagar ran away. All alone out in the wilderness, she was met by an angel who gave her an amazing message: "Return to your mistress and submit to her authority." The angel added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count." And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard about your misery" (Genesis 16:9-11).

When we are caught in no-win situations, it's tempting to run away through our addictive/compulsive escape hatches. At times like these God is there, and he is listening to our woes. We need to learn to express our pain to God instead of just trying to escape it. He hears our cries and is willing to give us hope for the future.

*Turn to page 313, Judges 16.*

be Abram; now you will be known as Abraham,\* for you will be the father of many nations. <sup>6</sup>I will give you millions of descendants who will represent many nations. Kings will be among them!

<sup>7</sup>"I will continue this everlasting covenant between us, generation after generation. It will continue between me and your offspring\* forever. And I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. <sup>8</sup>Yes, I will give all this land of Canaan to you and to your offspring forever. And I will be their God.

### The Sign of Circumcision

<sup>9</sup>"Your part of the agreement," God told Abraham, "is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. <sup>10</sup>This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised; <sup>11</sup>the flesh of his foreskin must be cut off. This will be a sign that you and they have accepted this covenant. <sup>12</sup>Every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family, but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. <sup>13</sup>All must be circumcised. Your bodies will thus bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup>Anyone who refuses to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for violating the covenant."

### Sarai Is Named Sarah

<sup>15</sup>Then God added, "Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai; from now on you will call her Sarah.\* <sup>16</sup>And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I

**17:5** *Abram* means "exalted father"; *Abraham* means "father of many." **17:7** Hebrew *seed*; also in 17:8. **17:15** *Sarah* means "princess." **17:19** *Isaac* means "he laughs."

will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings will be among her descendants!"

<sup>17</sup>Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. "How could I become a father at the age of one hundred?" he wondered. "Besides, Sarah is ninety; how could she have a baby?" <sup>18</sup>And Abraham said to God, "Yes, may Ishmael enjoy your special blessing!"

<sup>19</sup>But God replied, "Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You will name him Isaac,\* and I will confirm my everlasting covenant with him and his descendants. <sup>20</sup>As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will cause him to multiply and become a great nation. Twelve princes will be among his descendants. <sup>21</sup>But my covenant is with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year."

<sup>22</sup>That ended the conversation, and God left Abraham. <sup>23</sup>On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and every other male in his household and circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, exactly as God had told him. <sup>24</sup>Abraham was ninety-nine years old at that time, <sup>25</sup>and Ishmael his son was thirteen. <sup>26</sup>Both were circumcised the same day, <sup>27</sup>along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants.

## CHAPTER 18

### A Son Promised to Sarah

The LORD appeared again to Abraham while he was camped near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day about noon, as Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent, <sup>2</sup>he suddenly noticed three men standing nearby. He got up and ran to meet them, wel-

**17:5-6** Since Abram was childless, his name (meaning "exalted father") must have been a source of embarrassment to him. Here it is changed to "Abraham," which means "father of many." Abraham's name, in a real sense, became his promise from God. It would have been a continual reminder and source of hope that God would come through for him in the end.

**17:9-10, 24-27** Most of our significant relationships are symbolized by an outward sign. For example, married people wear rings as a sign of their marriage commitment. Circumcision was a sign of the agreement or covenant between God and Abraham. It was a mark by which Abraham's descendants were set apart as God's special people. Inner changes need to be accompanied by outer signs; beliefs need to be proven by actions. In recovery, as changes begin to take place inside, we need to express these changes outwardly in our actions and lifestyle.

**18:1-6** Hebrews 13:2 urges the practice of hospitality since some have "entertained angels without realizing it!" Abraham's treatment of the three strangers here may have been the background for this verse in Hebrews. Surely this is an example to be followed. As we progress in recovery, one of our goals is to help others discover the new way of life that we have found. What better way than to be hospitable toward others.

► **The Serenity Prayer**  
**devotional reading plan**  
**begins here.**

*GOD grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change  
the courage to change the things I can  
and the wisdom to know the difference  
AMEN*

**W**e all face difficult situations that involve the people we love. In some of these situations the wise course of action may not be clear. We may feel a heavy burden to act but have no idea what to do.

Abraham found himself in such a situation. The Lord had told Abraham that he intended to destroy the people of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness. Since Abraham's nephew Lot lived among the people of these cities, Abraham was concerned for their welfare. So Abraham approached God and said, "Will you destroy both innocent and guilty alike? Suppose you find fifty innocent people there within the city—will you still destroy it, and not spare it for their sakes? Surely you wouldn't do such a thing, destroying the innocent with the guilty. . . . Surely you wouldn't do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?" And the LORD replied, "If I find fifty innocent people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake" (Genesis 18:23-26). The bargaining went on: Suppose there are only forty-five . . . forty . . . thirty . . . twenty . . . ten? Finally God said, "Then, for the sake of the ten, I will not destroy it" (18:32).

Abraham wasn't sure what he could do in the situation he faced; he wasn't even sure what was right in this situation. He talked it over with God, reasoning it out, trying to do whatever he could. When we don't know how much of a change we can or even should make, we can start by talking it over with God. Then we can try to do as much as we feel confident doing. **Turn to page 53, Genesis 37.**

coming them by bowing low to the ground. <sup>3</sup>"My lord," he said, "if it pleases you, stop here for a while. <sup>4</sup>Rest in the shade of this tree while my servants get some water to wash your feet. <sup>5</sup>Let me prepare some food to refresh you. Please stay awhile before continuing on your journey."

"All right," they said. "Do as you have said."

<sup>6</sup>So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, "Quick! Get three measures\* of your best flour, and bake some bread." <sup>7</sup>Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a fat calf and told a servant to hurry and butcher it. <sup>8</sup>When the food was ready, he took some cheese curds and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them there beneath the trees.

<sup>9</sup>"Where is Sarah, your wife?" they asked him.

"In the tent," Abraham replied.

<sup>10</sup>Then one of them said, "About this time next year I will return, and your wife Sarah will have a son."

Now Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent nearby. <sup>11</sup>And since Abraham and Sarah were both very old, and Sarah was long past the age of having children, <sup>12</sup>she laughed silently to herself. "How could a worn-out woman like me have a baby?" she thought. "And when my master—my husband—is also so old?"

<sup>13</sup>Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?'" <sup>14</sup>Is anything too hard for the LORD? About a year from now, just as I told you, I will return, and Sarah will have a son." <sup>15</sup>Sarah was afraid, so she denied that she had laughed. But he said, "That is not true. You did laugh."

**18:6** Hebrew 3 *seahs*, about 15 quarts or 18 liters.

### Abraham Intercedes for Sodom

<sup>16</sup>Then the men got up from their meal and started on toward Sodom. Abraham went with them part of the way.

<sup>17</sup>“Should I hide my plan from Abraham?” the LORD asked. <sup>18</sup>“For Abraham will become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. <sup>19</sup>I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD and do what is right and just. Then I will do for him all that I have promised.” <sup>20</sup>So the LORD told Abraham, “I have heard that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah are extremely evil, and that everything they do is wicked. <sup>21</sup>I am going down to see whether or not these reports are true. Then I will know.”

<sup>22</sup>The two other men went on toward Sodom, but the LORD remained with Abraham for a while. <sup>23</sup>Abraham approached him and said, “Will you destroy both innocent and guilty alike? <sup>24</sup>Suppose you find fifty innocent people there within the city—will you still destroy it, and not spare it for their sakes? <sup>25</sup>Surely you wouldn’t do such a thing, destroying the innocent with the guilty. Why, you would be treating the innocent and the guilty exactly the same! Surely you wouldn’t do that! Should not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?”

<sup>26</sup>And the LORD replied, “If I find fifty innocent people in Sodom, I will spare the entire city for their sake.”

<sup>27</sup>Then Abraham spoke again. “Since I have begun, let me go on and speak further to my Lord, even though I am but dust and ashes. <sup>28</sup>Suppose there are only forty-five? Will you destroy the city for lack of five?”

And the LORD said, “I will not destroy it if I find forty-five.”

<sup>29</sup>Then Abraham pressed his request further. “Suppose there are only forty?”

And the LORD replied, “I will not destroy it if there are forty.”

<sup>30</sup>“Please don’t be angry, my Lord,” Abra-

ham pleaded. “Let me speak—suppose only thirty are found?”

And the LORD replied, “I will not destroy it if there are thirty.”

<sup>31</sup>Then Abraham said, “Since I have dared to speak to the Lord, let me continue—suppose there are only twenty?”

And the LORD said, “Then I will not destroy it for the sake of the twenty.”

<sup>32</sup>Finally, Abraham said, “Lord, please do not get angry; I will speak but once more! Suppose only ten are found there?”

And the LORD said, “Then, for the sake of the ten, I will not destroy it.”

<sup>33</sup>The LORD went on his way when he had finished his conversation with Abraham, and Abraham returned to his tent.

### CHAPTER 19

#### Sodom and Gomorrah Destroyed

That evening the two angels came to the entrance of the city of Sodom, and Lot was sitting there as they arrived. When he saw them, he stood up to meet them. Then he welcomed them and bowed low to the ground. <sup>24</sup>“My lords,” he said, “come to my home to wash your feet, and be my guests for the night. You may then get up in the morning as early as you like and be on your way again.”

“Oh no,” they said, “we’ll just spend the night out here in the city square.”

<sup>3</sup>But Lot insisted, so at last they went home with him. He set a great feast before them, complete with fresh bread made without yeast. After the meal, <sup>4</sup>as they were preparing to retire for the night, all the men of Sodom, young and old, came from all over the city and surrounded the house. <sup>5</sup>They shouted to Lot, “Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? Bring them out so we can have sex with them.”

<sup>6</sup>Lot stepped outside to talk to them, shutting the door behind him. <sup>7</sup>“Please, my brothers,” he begged, “don’t do such a wicked thing. <sup>8</sup>Look—I have two virgin

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**18:17-19** Many people wonder why God chose one man and his family out of all the others. Was this fair? These verses show us that God had an important purpose for choosing this one family. God picked Abraham so Abraham could teach his descendants God’s ways, for through his ancestral line would come Jesus the Messiah, a source of blessing for all the nations of the earth. God never planned to bless only one family. God chose one family to bring blessings and a means of recovery to all of us.

**18:22-32** Often we are urged to pray for others who have problems and difficulties. In these verses, we see Abraham entreating God on behalf of Lot and his family. He is deeply concerned for their welfare and intercedes for them as he speaks with God. This is similar to what we are asked to do in the twelfth step of the recovery process. We are to reach out and help others who are in need. Prayer is a powerful means of doing this.

## REFLECTIONS ON

## GENESIS

**\*insights** FROM THE NAMES OF GOD

The Hebrew name for God used in **Genesis 1:1** (*Elohim*) demonstrates the enormity of God's power to transform lives. This name for God is in the plural form, signifying his strength and might. It also hints that God is in some sense plural—a community unto himself (see also 1:26; 3:22; 11:7). But though this name is plural, it is treated grammatically as singular, revealing God's unified and personal nature. He is omnipotent in power but personal in his touch. He is able and willing to provide the help we need.

In **Genesis 2:4** a new Hebrew name for God is introduced: "LORD" (*Yahweh* or *Jehovah*). This is the personal name for God; it is his relationship name. It describes the God who chose Abraham and established a covenant with him. It describes the God who chose to relate to the Israelites and make them his people. It is the name that reminds us that God wants to have a relationship with us.

**\*insights** FROM GOD'S CREATION

As the source of all things, God is always able to meet our needs. The Hebrew verb translated "create" in **Genesis 1:1** describes an act that only God can do. It is used to describe three things that science cannot explain: the creation of something from nothing (1:1), the creation of living things from inanimate matter (1:21-22), and the creation of man (1:27). A God who can create people and the world we live in can certainly empower a person in the process of recovery.

**Genesis 1:2** describes the earth before it was shaped by God's creative hand. It was empty, formless, and dark. These three characteristics forebode nothing but trouble. But then we are told that "the Spirit of God was hovering over its surface." This fourth characteristic is a source of hope and promises recovery. The presence of the Holy Spirit was a necessary element in the events of all six days of Creation. In the same way, his presence in our life is necessary before any rebuilding and recovery can take place.

In **Genesis 1:3** God said, "Let there be light." The word *let* in this verse is used to introduce one of God's purposes for his creation—that there should be light in the world. This word is used repeatedly in this chapter to introduce the various things that God intended for his creation (see 1:6, 9, 11, 14-15, 20, 24, 26). He had a purpose and a plan for everything. He also has a plan for each of us. And his plan is designed to bring about the best for his creation. As we go through recovery, we need only be willing to turn the process over to his design and plan.

In **Genesis 1:26-27** we see that the first people were created to be like God. Oceans of ink have been spilled attempting to explain what this means. One characteristic that all the writers agree upon is the ability of people to make moral decisions. We have the power of choice, and we are accountable to God and to others for the choices we make. To continue in recovery we must take responsibility for this aspect of God's nature in each of us—our ability to choose.

**\*insights** ABOUT TEMPTATION

In **Genesis 2:16-17** God forbade Adam and Eve to eat from one certain tree. Why did he do this? Why didn't God create a world where people couldn't sin? Or why didn't he make people so they couldn't disobey his commands? The answer lies in the very nature of God. God is love and desires to have a loving relationship with his creatures. He wants us to respond to him with love in return. But a loving response is only possible when we have the choice to do otherwise. He wants us to obey because we love him, not because we have no other choice.

In **Genesis 3:1-3** Satan began his temptation of Eve by planting doubt in her mind concerning what God had said. Notice that Eve wasn't very clear on the details of God's command. God had

told them not to *eat* fruit from a certain tree (2:17). Eve claimed that God had said they were not to even *touch* the tree. She was making God's requirements more difficult than God himself had done! Her own confusion about what God had said made her even more susceptible to the serpent's wiles. We need a proper understanding of God's truth if we hope to stand against Satan's temptations.

In **Genesis 3:6** notice that Eve quickly succumbed to a visual temptation. Until Eve really saw the tree, she was not influenced by the three common elements of all temptation. She saw that the fruit of the tree would be good to eat ("the lust for physical pleasure"), that it looked lovely and fresh ("the lust for everything we see"), and that it was a tree that would make her wise ("pride in our possessions"). These are still important weapons in Satan's arsenal of temptation (see 1 John 2:16).

### **\*insights** ABOUT SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In **Genesis 3:7** Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness. With their act of disobedience came embarrassment and shame. They did their best to cover themselves; they didn't like what they saw when they looked at themselves. This happens to all of us when we sin and become dependent on cruel addictions. We don't like what we see, so we cover it up with lies and half-truths. We do it to preserve our relationships. But in the end, our intimacy with others is destroyed. We need to be honest with ourself and with others and work at reestablishing our relationships. This is a significant part of our recovery.

In **Genesis 3:10** Adam admitted that he was hiding from God. One of the terrible consequences of sin is the isolation that results. We want to hide from other people; we want to hide from God. Our failures will always make us want to hide. But recovery means that we must bring our sins out into the open; this will then bring us back into our relationships—with others and with God.

In **Genesis 3:15** it becomes obvious that Adam and Eve were powerless to resist sin by themselves. Alone, they could not overwhelm Satan and escape the temptations he offered. In his grace, however, God promised that the offspring of the woman would defeat Satan. He promised that he would take charge of the recovery process and overcome the enemy. This is good news—the first mention of the gospel of grace that would eventually be fulfilled by the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

In **Genesis 3:18-19** we see that after the Fall, even the earth responded differently to its human masters. In the beginning the earth was their constant ally, yielding its fruits easily to their hands. But now, it brought forth thorns and thistles and weeds. Work became an arduous task, frustrating and unfulfilling.

There was no reason for Adam and Eve to expect to live on after their failure. God had clearly stated that the consequences of their sin would be death (see 2:17). Yet in **Genesis 3:20** Adam displayed his faith in our gracious God by naming his wife Eve, which means "to give life." He believed that she would live to be the mother of the human race. Adam's faith in God gave him hope for the future, even when his past gave him little to hope for.

### **\*insights** FROM CAIN AND ABEL

In **Genesis 4:4** Abel slew an innocent substitute as his offering, and God accepted him. Abel was obedient to God's instructions. Our relationship with God can be established by accepting God's gracious forgiveness and allowing the innocent sacrifice of his Son to stand in our place. Abel's sacrifice of one of his lambs was the second death mentioned in the Bible.

In **Genesis 4:5** we see that God rejected Cain's offering. We may wonder why. We don't have all the details, but we do know that his offering was given in rebellion (see Jude 1:11). Apparently Cain wanted to do things his way; he didn't want to follow the program that God had mapped out for this first human family. Cain responded to the rejection with anger and dejection. He wanted to be accepted by God, but he wanted to earn divine approval by his hard work in the fields. God could not accept his gift of farm produce. Acceptance by God cannot be bought with hard work; we need to admit our need and humbly allow a sacrifice to stand in our place. God has provided us with the perfect sacrifice in the person of Jesus Christ. He stands in our place, paying for all our failures and sins and freeing us to start again.

### **\*insights** FROM NOAH'S LIFE

After years of waiting, God saw that the human race still refused to live according to his plan. In **Genesis 6:5-6** we see that things were getting worse, not better. This broke God's heart because

of the great love he had for his creation. It should encourage us to know that God doesn't punish us in anger. He does it for our good because he loves us.

In **Genesis 6:7** God promises to judge his fallen and sinful creation. Even though God is patient with us and gives us many chances to change our ways, we cannot act with impunity. Because he is righteous, God must act to protect innocent people who are hurt by sin.

God had assigned Noah the monumental task of rebuilding human society on earth. But God didn't just hand Noah the task and walk away. In **Genesis 9:9-13** God promises not to destroy Noah's work with another flood and sets a rainbow in the sky as a seal of his promise. Many of us are rebuilding, too. We can be sure that God will support our recovery with his presence and promises. And we should keep an eye out for the "rainbows" along the way. God often leaves us signs to remind us of his loving presence and care.

### **\*insights** FROM ABRAHAM'S LIFE

In **Genesis 12:2-3** God gave Abram some special promises. He would make Abram the father of a great nation, he would bless him and make him famous, and he would make Abram a blessing to others. God promised to bless those who blessed Abram and to curse those who cursed him. Notice that God's promises to Abram illustrate Step Twelve in recovery. After receiving God's blessing, Abram was to turn around and share it with others.

We may wonder what Abram expected the Promised Land to be like. In **Genesis 12:10** we see that he arrived to find the land ravaged by famine. It probably wasn't what he had expected or hoped for, but it was the place that God had intended for him and his descendants. There will be times in recovery when things are difficult. Sometimes we may need to do things that we are not comfortable doing. But we need to follow God—even when his program doesn't lead us down the paths we had expected or hoped for.

The lie that Abram decided to tell the Egyptians in **Genesis 12:11-13** showed that he lacked faith in God. He didn't believe that God would protect him, so he took things into his own hands. We may feel that a little lie is justified if it is intended to protect something important to us. We may even succeed in getting away with it for a while, but all lies reap long-term consequences. It is best to trust God to protect us as we tell the truth. The God of truth will stand with us as we step out in faith.

In **Genesis 22:8-13** we find Abraham about to sacrifice his son Isaac. Much to the relief of Abraham and Isaac, however, God provided a substitute. We do not know what Abraham had in mind when he told his son that God would provide a sacrifice, but we do know that God has provided a sacrifice for us—not simply a ram caught in a bush but his only Son. Anyone who believes in him will have the means for discovering a new life now and through eternity as well.

### **\*insights** FROM JOSEPH'S LIFE

Many commentators have noted that nothing bad is ever said about Joseph. That may be true of his adult life, but as a boy he was irritatingly overconfident. In **Genesis 37:2** we see that he was also a tattletale. Joseph's arrogant behavior as a youth, along with his father's favoritism, planted seeds of hatred in his brothers' hearts. Consequently, Joseph suffered years of slavery in Egypt. Joseph was certainly more worthy of praise than his brothers, but he can hardly be given perfect marks.

In **Genesis 39:19-23** we see that God was with Joseph even in prison. We are told that Joseph prospered in everything he did. And through all his trials, Joseph remained faithful to God. It would have been easy for him to start playing the victim and just give up. When we play the victim, we start to blame others and lose our ability to act. We need to stop blaming and start acting, doing our best in the situations in which God places us.

In **Genesis 50:15-21** a clear message emerges: Man proposes, but God disposes. Joseph's brothers intended their actions toward Joseph for evil, but God used those actions for good. It is wonderful that God can veto our foolish plans, transforming our mistakes and failures into the means for his gracious purposes.

# Life Recovery

## TOPICAL INDEX

This index locates the notes, profiles, devotionals, and recovery themes related to key issues in recovery. Page numbers are provided to make it easy to find all the features listed. Related issues are named in parentheses to make an expanded study on any topic a simple task. For additional information, see the other specialized indexes that follow this topical index: Index to Recovery Profiles, Index to Twelve Step Devotionals, Index to Recovery Principle Devotionals, Index to Serenity Prayer Devotionals, Index to Recovery Reflections.

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# *Serenity*

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