



Studies in
Genesis 12-50

Term 1, 2017

St Alban's Press

Expectations in our Growth Groups

Growth groups are a vital part of the way we experience Christian community here at St Alban's. There are a number of practical reasons why we meet in this way:

- We meet for mutual support and encouragement in our walk with the Lord. **We need each other!** And so prayer is an important ingredient in our gatherings.
- **The Bible** is at the heart of our meetings. We believe God speaks through his word and it is there that he reveals His person, character and will. If we are to have any chance of maturing as Christians then a deepening understanding of God's word is essential. Jesus is always the end point of this revelation in God's word. But knowledge is not the ultimate goal as important as it is. Personal relationship & transformation is what God wants for us and that we also should have in view.
- **Spiritual growth** and maturity of faith is what we are on about. This only happens when we **APPLY** in our lives the things we have learnt. If we are not applying God's word in our lives it is questionable whether we are really saved! James 2.17, *'In the same way, faith by itself if not accompanied by action is dead.'*
- **Accountability:** Growth groups are a place where we should lovingly hold each other accountable in our commitment to Jesus and his people, the Church.

As the writer of Hebrews so beautifully said, *'Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let consider how we might spur one another toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day (of the Lord) approaching.'*

Our Vision: 'Building Christian Community'

In our recent Vision Sunday service we were encouraged to do two things:

- Give more time to your personal relationship with the Lord, in personal prayer and Bible reading.
- Also to consider being in an MP3 outreach prayer group.

Our Growth Groups are a wonderful place for us to encourage each other in this endeavor as we seek to honour Christ in our lives. As the Senior Minister said, we want to be a group of **'God besotted, Jesus honouring, disciple making disciples.'** He also said, 'What are you going to say 'NO' to - in order to be able to say 'YES' to give more time to the Lord in the application of your faith?'

So this year we want to be bold enough to ask each other some simple questions on a regular basis:

- ◆ **How are you going spiritually? Are you growing in your faith?**
- ◆ **What has the Lord been teaching you from his word lately?**

The goal of such questions is NOT guilt but growth.

So what expectations and accountability are you going to build into your group in 2017. Here are some suggestions:

Expectations for 2017

- Be committed to weekly Sunday attendance.
- Be committed to weekly attendance at our Growth Group as we express our support for each other.
- Be committed to daily bible reading & prayer.
- Be held accountable by members of the group to your walk with the Lord and spiritual growth. You are giving permission for them to ask the hard questions.
- Support the Vision of our church in the use of all the resources God has given you—as faithfully as you are able.

May God bless us all richly as we embark on a new year as disciples of the Lord Jesus, trusting in his enabling grace.

Michael

Introduction

‘Genesis the book of beginnings, sets the scene for the whole of the Bible, and addresses the whole human race. It anticipates the most basic questions that anyone can ask about the origins of the universe and all of life.’ Joyce Baldwin Bible Speaks Today

This being the case there is great reward in studying and understanding these pages of scripture—they are foundational.

The Book of Genesis can best be divided into two sections. Chapters 1-11 sometimes called Primeval History & Chapters 12 -50, where we see the beginning of Salvation History with God’s election of a people for himself.

Chapters 1-11 could be divided up as follows: (Geisler)

- 1-2 The creation of humanity
- 3-5 The corruption of humanity
- 6-9 The destruction of humanity
- 10-11 The dispersion of humanity

With the creation of humanity followed closely by the fall of humanity, God’s plans for relationship with the pinnacle of his creation seems doomed. However, God’s plans can never be thwarted and with the call of Abram in chapter 12 we see the beginning of God’s plans IN history to reconcile humanity to their Creator.

As we read the narrative of chapters 12-50 and meet God’s elect in the people of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob we will be powerfully reminded of their frailty and of a humanity that continues to be fatally flawed.

But we will also witness the God of creation who enters into covenant with his people so that the redemption of humanity is assured. It is assured not because of human effort but because God will keep his promises and not allow his people to slip from the grip of his relentless grace.

Michael Crichton

Gripped By Grace

Studies in Genesis Chapter 12-50

Study 1.	Gracious Promises	Genesis 12.1-9
Study 2.	Covenant of Grace	Genesis 15.1-21
Study 3.	Grace Abandoned?	Genesis 19.1-29
Study 4.	The Obedience of Grace	Genesis 22.1-19
Study 5.	Choices of the Heart	Genesis 25.19-34
Study 6.	Resisting Grace	Genesis 32.22-32
Study 7.	Joseph and God's amazing...	Genesis 39.1-23
Study 8.	Unrelenting Grace	Genesis 50.14-26

Further Reading:

The Message of Genesis 12-50	Joyce Baldwin BST
Genesis	Derek Kidner IVP
Salvation Begins	Andrew Reid Aquila
A Popular Survey of the Old Testament	Norman Geisler Baker

Note: These studies cannot cover every aspect of the narrative of Genesis 12-50. For maximum benefit it would be helpful to read the whole of this narrative before starting the studies. It is always very helpful to see the 'whole' before studying the parts!

Chronology: The events of Genesis 12-50 occur between 2000-1800 BC (approx.)

Study 1.*Gripped by Grace***GRACIOUS PROMISES
Genesis 12.1-20**

If we are to appreciate the unfolding history of Genesis 12-50 we need to take time to remind ourselves of the sequence of events in Genesis 1-11.

It has been suggested that in these chapters there is a sequence of events that follows a pattern: Sin—Judgment—Grace.

Man sins, God responds with his judgment, but God also bestows grace. See if you can identify those three elements in one or two of the following stories:

- A. The Fall Genesis 3.1-24

- B. Cain & Abel Genesis 4.1-18

- C. The Flood Genesis 6-9

- D. The Tower of Babel Genesis 11.1-8

Does anything strike you about God's grace in these stories?

Read Genesis 12.1-9

1. When people make promises to you, do you tend to believe they will keep them or do you take them with a grain of salt? Why?
Are you good at keeping promises? What sort of promises do you tend to make?

2. With the call of Abram (later his name changes to Abraham 17.5) God enters into covenant relationship with him. He makes a number of promises. Identify them:

i. v1 _____

ii. v2a _____

iii. v2b _____

iv. v3a _____

v. v3b _____

To what degree are these promises conditional on Abraham's response?

3. In view of Genesis 1-11 how do these promises demonstrate once again God's amazing grace?

4. How would you describe Abram's response to the call of God? v4-6
See also Acts 7.2-4; Hebrews 11.8

5. Do you think there was a high cost involved for Abram in obeying God?

6. Can you identify any immediate obstacles to the fulfillment of these promises?

See Gen. 11.30; 12.4; 12.6

7. What is the significance of Abram building altars all over the place in the land of Canaan? v6-9

8. **Read 12.10-20**

How do Abram's actions jeopardize the possible fulfillment of God's gracious promises?

9. What do Abram's actions demonstrate?

Do you find yourself falling into the same sort of trap as Abram did here, as you seek to live out your Christian faith? Give examples. What can we do to stop this happening?

10. Despite Abram's failure in Egypt can you see ways in which God is already keeping his promises in regard to blessings and curses? See 12.17; 13.1-6

11. **Read Galatians 3.6-14**

Who are the descendants of Abraham today? How are they recipients of the promise God gave to Abraham?

12. God has given us many promises in Christ? List as many as you can think of. Do you believe them? How does your life demonstrate belief or unbelief in relation to these promises?

Praise God that he always keeps his promises and that he keeps his people in the grip of his amazing grace!

COVENANT OF GRACE

Genesis 15.1-21

Having heeded the call of God, Abram now begins to be concerned about an heir. In Chapters 15-17 we see God graciously reassure Abram and confirm his covenant with him.

Read Genesis 15.1-21

1. Have you looked up at the stars on a dark night lately? How do you think Abram would have felt when God told him he would have that many descendants?

2. Verse 6 is one of the most significant verses in all scripture! It shows that relationship with God has always been on the basis of grace NOT law. This covenant precedes Sinai where the law was given.

Read Romans 4.1-16

Why did Abraham have nothing to boast about? Why do we have nothing to boast about?

What foundational truth does Paul run with in these verses?

What is the relationship between faith and the promises of God?

3. Abram raises another concern with God in v7f. What is it?

How do you think Abram felt when told the promise of land would NOT be fulfilled for 400 years? v13 What challenge do you think this might have brought to Abram?

4. Do you think it is more difficult to be faithful when you know God's promises won't be fulfilled during your own lifetime? Why? Does that apply to us in any way?
5. In verses 17-21 God 'formalizes' the covenant. In those days, walking between the severed halves of animals was a symbolic way of sealing the agreement. The ceremony said, in effect, 'May I become like these animals if I break this contract.'

Let's be clear about the facts:

What does the future hold for Abram's descendants?

What events are being predicted?

What does the future hold for Abram?

6. v16 is worth pondering. God has just told Abram that his descendants must suffer in slavery for 400 years before the time is right for God to bring his own justice on the Amorites when Joshua finally invades the land.

What profound lesson does this challenge us with?

7. (Optional) Read Chapter 16.

How do we see the frailty of man and yet the grace of God at work in these events?

8. Read Genesis 17.1-27

List again the promises God gives to Abraham v1-8 Are there any new promises?

9. The emphasis in these chapters is very much on what God will do. However what does God now ask Abram to do to keep the covenant? v9-14

Do you think there is anything significant about the location of the sign of the covenant on the male anatomy?

10. What is Abraham's response to God's word? v22-27

Note: God's blessing on Ishmael v20. What does this teach us about God?

11. Does God still require circumcision of believers today?
See Romans 2.28,29 and Galatians 5.6

12. In what ways do you identify with Abraham's struggles in these chapters? ie. Ch. 16

How does God's care of Abraham encourage you in your relationship with him?

13. We are the spiritual descendants of Abraham and in covenant relationship with God through Christ.
If we are to continue to receive God's blessing in that covenant - is it dependent on us or him?

Study 3.***Gripped by Grace***

**GRACE ABANDONED?
Genesis 19.1-29**

The Old Testament story of Sodom and Gomorrah is legendary! Everybody knows about it—but what does it mean? What is the point of the story?

In Genesis 19 we see the visitation of two angels as a prelude to the visitation of God's wrath in judgment on the people of this lawless town.

Read Genesis 18.16—33

These verses set the scene for what follows.

1. What reason or motivation does God give for showing Abraham what he is about to do? v17-19

God has chosen Abraham by grace but how does he expect him to live?

By contrast what was the situation in Sodom? v20-21
See also Gen. 13.13

If Sodom is such a place, what does Lot's presence there Ch. 19 possibly indicate about Lot?

2. What aspect of Abraham's character do we witness here that we haven't seen before? v22-33

3. **Read Genesis 19.1-29**

How did Lot act honourably in this situation?

In what ways did he act foolishly?

4. Where is God's grace evident in these events?
5. If God had told Abraham he would not inherit the land till the sin of the Amorites had reached its full measure 15.16, why do you think he chooses to pour out his judgment on these few cities now?
6. Do you think Abraham would have found God's judgment in this way reassuring or frightening? What would these events have done for his faith?
7. Does the thought of the coming judgment when Christ returns encourage you, strengthen your faith, or terrify you? Explain.
8. What effect does knowledge of the coming judgment have on the choices you make and the way you live? (See 2 Peter 2.4-6)

9. What warning is there for us in the actions of Lot's wife's?

Read Luke 17.26-37; 1 Timothy 6.3-12

10. Did God answer Abraham's prayer or not? Does this have anything to teach us about intercessory prayer?

(See James 5.13-20)

11. What is the only means by which we can be spared the wrath and judgment of God?

See Romans 5.6-11; Revelation 6.16

12. What is the best way for us to combat the worldliness and corruption that surrounds us in a city like Sydney?

How can we resist getting caught up in the pursuit of comfort and lifestyle? What would that look like practically in our lives?

Pray for God's mercy on your non-believing friends and the corrupt society in which we live—for judgment is surely coming! Lord have mercy!

How are your MP3's going? Are you praying for them?

Study 4.***Gripped by Grace*****THE ODEIENCE OF GRACE
Genesis 22.1-19**

At last the suspense is over. Since chapter 12 we have been tormented with the prospect of God's plans being thwarted through the inability of Abraham to have an heir from his own body. In chapter 21 Isaac is born to Abraham & Sarah in their old age. Abraham's patience had been tested for 25 years—but at last he had been rewarded with a son. However, his greatest test was still to come!

1. Do you think being a follower of Christ involves having a 'reasoned' faith or blind faith?

Are the things that God asks us to do and believe in following him always 'reasonable' or logical?

Give examples

How do you know the difference between taking a step of faith and being irresponsible?

Read Genesis 22.1-19

2. What did God ask Abraham to do? How do you think he felt?

3. Why would God 'test' Abraham? Why does God test any of his people? Is testing really necessary?

What are the benefits of testing for us? What is difficult about being tested?

4. **Read Hebrews 11.17-19**

How could Abraham bring himself to sacrifice his Son?

What does this incident prove about Abraham?

See: 22.12, 18

5. There is a very strong parallel between this story and the sacrifice of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. You might like to make a list yourself or look up the following verses:

	Abraham & Isaac	Jesus
a.	Gen. 22.2a	Mark 1.11; John 3.16
b.	Gen. 22.2b	Matt. 27.33, 2 Chron. 3.1
c.	Gen. 22.6	John 19.17

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Abraham & Isaac | Jesus |
| d. | Genesis 22.4 | Mark 9.31; Heb. 11.19 |
| e. | Genesis 22.13-14 | John 1.29 Isaiah 53,7,10 |

Note: Genesis 22 is a pivotal passage in scripture for understanding how God fulfills his purposes in the world and points us forward to the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. God in the end will do what he did not ask of Abraham, sacrifice his one and only Son, so that the world might be blessed through his 'seed'. Awesome!

6. It is also possible to see some connection between Adam (Genesis 2 & 3) and Abraham.

What did Abraham succeed in doing that Adam didn't?

7. Ultimately what did Abraham believe that Adam didn't?
See Genesis 3.1-5; Romans 8.28

8. Read James 2.20-24

What lesson does James want us to learn from this episode in Abraham's life?

9. The genuineness of our faith is tested in everyday and in extreme situations.

Are there areas of your life that are difficult — that you feel God is testing you in?

10. What makes it hard to persevere in the Christian life?

11. Do you struggle to believe any of the following? Why?

a. That God works all things together for good?

b. That God will allow bad things to happen to you that are no fault of your own?

c. That God will ask you to give up perfectly good things?

12. Ultimately - what does God ask of us?
Mark 8.34-38 Romans 1.5-6, 12.1-2

What does it mean when the Apostle speaks of the obedience that comes from faith?

Pray that God would help you to walk in faithful obedience to his word and trust him beyond human reasoning.

Study 5.***Gripped by Grace*****CHOICES OF THE HEART
Genesis 25.19-34**

As we reach the middle of the book of Genesis Abraham has died but he is fast becoming the father of nations (25.1-18). However there is only one nation and one line that will be the recipient of God's blessing and the one through whom he will fulfill his purposes. After all the drama surrounding Isaac, his birth and possible sacrifice, he now takes back stage in many respects as the narrative focuses on the story of his two sons - Jacob and Esau.

Read Genesis 25.12-34

1. Thinking back over past studies why is it significant that Rebekah was barren?

Note: The birthright was a special inheritance that came to the first-born sons. It meant they would eventually receive double inheritance and be the leader of the family on the father's death.

2. What prediction is made about the twins in Rebekah's womb? In what way does it seem strange given the birthright custom? v22,23

3. The story highlights many differences between Jacob and Esau - list them.

Esau

Jacob

4. Why did Esau sell his birthright? What did he exchange it for?

What does this tell us about Esau? About Jacob?

5. **Read Genesis 27.1-29** (Quickly!)

How does the favouritism of the parents shape what happens? Gen. 25.28

Is there anything to be learnt from this about the dangers of parental favouritism?

6. By what means did Jacob get the blessing?

What was the **CONTENT** of the blessing Isaac gave Jacob?

Read Genesis 27.30-45 (Quickly!)

In the ancient world a person's word was much more binding than ours today. Even though it was obtained by fraud Isaac could not cancel his blessing once it was spoken.

7. How does Isaac react when he realizes what has happened?

What blessing does Isaac have for Esau? v37-40

How does Esau react? v41

What is Jacob's response? v41-46

8. **Read Hebrews 12.14-17**

According to Hebrews why did Esau lose his birthright?

9. Esau exchanged future blessings for short term pleasure and satisfaction.

In what ways do people today exchange future blessings for immediate gratification?

Are there danger areas in this regard for you? What are they? How can you resist them?

10. **Read Romans 9.10-18**

According to Romans, why did Esau lose his birthright?

Does that seem fair? What does Paul think? v19f

11. The doctrine of election is not easy to grasp but it is intimately bound up with the doctrine of salvation by grace alone.

What do you think is the connection between election and grace?

12. God is a God who makes choices. But we are people whom God allows to make choices as well. Our choices matter and make a difference, just as they did for Esau.

What are some of the choices we are faced with that can lead to either God's blessing or God's condemnation?
See Deuteronomy 30.11-20 Matt. 19.16-30

Study 6***Gripped by Grace*****RESISTING GRACE
Genesis 32.22-32**

Jacob has been the recipient of God's electing grace and yet his life has been marked by deceit from beginning to end. He deceived his brother and his father. (Gen. 25-27) He in turn is deceived by Laban as he tries to marry Rachel his daughter. (Gen. 29) Jacob in turn deceives Laban in the reproduction of his flocks. After twenty years away, Jacob returns home and is confronted by God before being reconciled to Esau.

Read Genesis 32.1-21

1. Jacob prepares to meet Esau in essentially two ways. What are they?
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____

2. What is the significance of Jacob's prayer? Do you think it reveals a change in character in Jacob or is he still the great deceiver?

Was Jacob's planning an indication of his lack of faith?

What is the relationship between prayer and action?

3. In what ways is Jacob's prayer in 9-12 a model for us?

Read Genesis 32.22-32

This encounter brings Jacob's life to a significant turning point. Only as he confronts God and then Esau is he able to put the struggles of the past behind him and move forward with God's renewed blessing.

4. How do we know that the person Jacob struggles with is God?
5. What is the significance of Jacob's disjointed hip? v25
6. What does Jacob's change of name signify?
7. In what way had Jacob, '*wrestled with God and man and overcome*'?
8. How does God demonstrate his grace to Jacob in this situation?

9. Jacob had struggled to get a blessing from his earthly father and here he struggles to get a blessing from his heavenly father.
Why was receiving this blessing so important to Jacob?

10. 'Blessing' has been a big theme in the life of Jacob. For what sort of blessings does God want us to pray?

11. Have there been times in your life when you know you have resisted God in some way? What was the outcome? What did you learn through the experience?

12. Why do you struggle to live in total dependence on God? Be specific—what is THE issue for you?

'What if we stopped holding back? What if we gave everything to God—every day? What difference would that make to our lives?

How can we help each other to be more like Jesus who trusted and obeyed God's word without questioning?

Study 7***Gripped by Grace*****JOSEPH AND GOD'S AMAZING GRACE!
Genesis 39.1-23**

'It is entirely appropriate to read Genesis 39 as a lesson in moral courage, a case study of a God fearing man who rightly perceives that an attractive temptation is in reality an invitation to sin against God, and who therefore cares more for his purity than his prospects.' D.A Carson

Remind yourself of the details that led to Joseph, one of Jacob's sons being in Egypt.

Read Genesis 37.1-36

1. What special gift had God given Joseph?

What was his relationship like with:

- a. God
 - b. His brothers
 - c. His father
2. Once again we find the younger son being chosen to rule over the older. Why do you think God delights in flouting human conventions?

Can you think of other examples from the New Testament where God's way flies in the face of worldly wisdom?

3. What do 37.18-28 tell us about the power of jealousy?
v11

4. As Jacob tricked his father, so his sons deceive him. Is this just a coincidence or a reminder that deceit begets deceit—or is it a simple case of ‘Like father like son.’ ?
See Numbers 14.17-23

5. How is God’s grace evident in this family feud?
Especially for Joseph?

Read Genesis 39.1-23

6. What was Joseph’s relationship like with Potiphar and God before and after the incident with his wife?

	Before	After
Potiphar	_____	_____
God	_____	_____

What does this have to teach us?

7. Joseph was a slave—but in another sense he was free. In Genesis 38 we read the sordid tale of one of Joseph's brothers, Judah. He was free but in a very real way enslaved.

In what sense was Joseph free?

Despite circumstances we can experience true freedom. Despite being free we can also be enslaved.

What is the key to us experiencing true freedom?

See Galatians 5.1; 16-26

8. Joseph was faced with persistent and attractive temptation. See 39.10

Are you conscious of persistent temptation in your own life? What form does it take?

How can you resist it? See 1 Peter 4.1-5; 5.6-11

9. Can you think of ways in which Christians may compromise on purity (not just sexually) in order to seek promotion or acceptance in the eyes of the world?

Note: Joseph's primary concern 39.9

10. How did God bestow his grace on Joseph, even in prison? How did God ultimately honour his faithful servant? See 41.41-49

11. Theologically speaking how have God's promises to Abraham progressed at this stage? Gen. 12.1-3
 - * Land
 - * A great nation
 - * Name becomes great
 - * The nations blessed

What are the apparent obstacles to their fulfillment now?

12. What was it about Joseph that so warmly commended him to others?

What quality commends you to others?

Pray that God might help us to so live by faith in Christ that people might be amazed—and bring glory to him!

Study 8**Gripped by Grace****UNRELENTING GRACE**
Genesis 50.14-26

The story of Jacob, his sons and Joseph reaches its climax as Genesis comes to a close. The famine throughout the region which Joseph's dream had foretold was upon them. It brought his brothers from Canaan in search of food. What they find is revelation, redemption and reconciliation and it's all because of God's unrelenting grace.

Read Genesis 45. 1-11; Genesis 50.15-21

1. What was the response of Joseph to his brothers? Is this surprising considering all that had happened?

How would you have felt in the same situation?

2. How did the brothers feel? Before Jacob's death and even more so afterwards? Is this understandable?

3. Joseph's brothers beg for forgiveness and in response he grants it.

Does this have anything to teach us about reconciliation?

Can there ever be real reconciliation & forgiveness without repentance? See Matthew 18.21-22f

4. When life treats us badly we often become bitter. How can we guard against the root of bitterness taking hold in our lives?

Do we tend to have wrong expectations of God? Where do they come from?

Are you aware of areas in your life where you may be vulnerable? Think—is there anyone or anything you resent?

Another clue: who gets you angry? See Eph. 4:26-27

5. **Read Genesis 45.19-24**

How does Joseph reassure and honour his family?

Why does Joseph warn his brothers in v24?

6. What has the story of Joseph taught you:
 - a. about human frailty

 - b. the dangers of favouritism in families?

 - c. the grace of God

7. What was the secret to Joseph's ability to forgive?

8. How did Joseph keep all the painful events in his life in perspective? 50.19-21

Do you struggle to keep perspective when life isn't turning out the way you think it should? Why?

How can you prepare for life's uncertainties? Can you?

9. What does the cross of Christ have to teach us about God's grace and his sovereign purposes?

See Romans 8.28f

10. The book of Genesis began in Eden and ends in a coffin in a foreign land. 50.26

Why is Joseph's instructions about his bones so significant? v24-25 (See Hebrews 11.21-22)

11. Think back over the studies in Genesis 12-50. What stands out for you?

What have you learnt about God, grace, faith—yourself?

Has your faith grown this term? How?

12. We, like the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac & Jacob), have been given God's promises in Christ. God will fulfill his promises because of his unrelenting grace.

Be patient, be faithful and be obedient because God always keeps his word and what awaits us is glorious!

2 Peter 1.3-11; Revelation 21.1-4; 1 Peter 1.3-9

