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DAILY *manna*

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GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

I trust that this new format of *Daily Manna*, which delves a little more into the Word of God, has given you some depth in the Holy Scriptures. *Daily Manna* is by no means a verse-by-verse commentary. It only tries to highlight some of the nuances and 'little gems' in God's Word, which often pass us by in our casual reading of Scripture.

So, let me encourage you to keep on reading and keep digging God's Word so that you may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me also encourage you to write in with your comments as to how we may improve *Daily Manna* (e-mail: calvary@singnet.com.sg). Parents, we want to remind you that *DM Junior* is also available for your children.

A note to new Daily Manna readers

In this book, you will find a reading plan that will guide you through reading the Bible in two years. You will also find a simple exposition based on the reading of the day. From the day's Bible passages, *Daily Manna* highlights biblical principles which may be applied in the Christian's daily living. We pray that the *Daily Manna* readings will make your reading through the Bible a more meaningful experience. Over the next two years, our focus will be on the Old Testament with the aim of giving you a more in-depth study of the OT books.

A step-by-step approach

1. Read the day's Bible chapters assigned in *Daily Manna*.
2. Review the Bible chapters to get an overview of what you have just read.
3. Read the accompanying devotions in *Daily Manna* and reflect on the lessons learnt.
4. Pray and ask God to help you apply His Word to your life.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Isaac Ong
Calvary B-P Church

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 16:7–10

LESSON

Submitting to the owner

VERSE 9

*And the angel of the LORD
said unto her, Return to thy
mistress, and submit thyself
under her hands.*

Hagar was just an ordinary Egyptian maid serving in the household of Abram [v. 1]. Her main responsibility was to tend to the needs of her mistress, Sarai. She was obligated to perform whatever duties her mistress desired of her. This became the beginning of not only a domestic dispute but also a national problem for the Jewish nation for many generations to come.

As soon as Hagar conceived a child with Abram, she prided herself to Sarai and this brought the house down as it were. She was eventually cast out of the house. It was obvious that she was planning to return home in Egypt. The adjacent desert was called the wilderness of Shur [v. 7]. She and her child would have died if not for the timely appearance and words of the angel recalling her to reflection and duty [v. 9].

The words of counsel to Hagar were to return and to submit to her mistress. It would not be easy for Hagar to accept those challenging words. It would mean for her to swallow her pride and suppress her stubbornness. She would probably need to face harsher treatment from Sarai from now on. Nevertheless, if her return and submission would bring life and blessings, as promised by the angel of the Lord, it would be worthwhile [v. 10].

Repentance and humility are the twin graces that draw life and blessings from the Lord. If you heed the call of God for your return and submission to Him Who holds our very breath, you will go away with His forgiveness and mercies.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 1
PSALMS 1-2

PRAYER

O Lord, grant me grace to see my wants and wandering so that I may return to Thee Who alone can satisfy my deepest desires.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 16:11–16***LESSON****Seen and sought of God****VERSE 13**

And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

We see here the first mention in Scripture of the Angel of the Lord. This remarkable title appeared four times in this chapter alone [v. 7, 9–11]. From the words of Hagar, this Angel who spoke to her was no ordinary angel. He was none other than Jehovah Himself [v. 13]. It was the manifestation of God in visible form seen by mortal men.

It was this Angel who was keenly aware of Hagar's plight and predicament. He found her by a fountain of water, which indicated that He had sought her and now had come to comfort and counsel her in her grief. Though it was not mentioned distinctly if Hagar had actually prayed, God had heard her groans and seen her tears. It is evident that the eyes and ears of the Lord are opened to those who cry unto Him, even to their silent voice of affliction. Justly may her child be called 'Ishmael' signifying that 'the Lord will hear' the cry of the oppressed and deliver the fainting heart.

Soon Hagar acknowledged her own insensitivity and realised that God's presence had always been with her. She marvelled that she had seen God and yet survived after this special revelation. Thus the well was called 'Beerlahairoi', which meant 'well of life of vision'.

God not only sees us through and through, He also knows us altogether. This thought of an omnipresent God should overwhelm us. Because He is gracious and kind, we will live before Him in reverential fear and whole-hearted praise.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

LEVITICUS 2
PSALMS 3–4

PRAYER

O Lord, turn my afflictions from sorrows into praises to Him Who giveth songs in the night.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 17:1–3***LESSON****Walking and talking with
the Almighty****VERSE 1**

*And when Abram was
ninety years old and nine,
the LORD appeared to
Abram, and said unto him,
I am the Almighty God;
walk before me, and be
thou perfect.*

Who says that we are useless once we are old? God still desires our fellowship and friendship no matter how old or how young we are. He delights in our companionship. Abram had walked with God for a long time and still God required him to continue in his walk with Him. He was not about to cast Abram away as a useless and senile man. How precious this thought is!

Abram responded to God's invitation by falling on his face [v. 3]. This was an attitude of profoundest reverence assumed by most Eastern people. He prostrated with his body resting on his hands and knees, with his face bent until his forehead touched the ground. It was an expression of deep humility and profound reverence to the Almighty.

It had been 13 years since the birth of Ishmael and yet Abram had not seen the fulfilment of God's promise concerning Sarah. Though the divine promises might be long delayed, they will all be accomplished in God's perfect time. He is the Almighty God and He can do all according to His good pleasure. Those who continue to patiently obey and trust in Him will never be disappointed.

What a privilege that mortals like us can walk and talk with the Almighty God! Often, He is more ready to respond to us than we are to seek His face and favour. Pray that nothing will drive a wedge between our God and us.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ**

**LEVITICUS 3
PSALMS 5–6**

PRAYER

Gracious Father, allow us to enjoy the sweet moments of communion with Thee on this side of heaven.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 17:4–8***LESSON****The promise of the covenant****VERSE 6**

And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

Jehovah, the covenant-keeping God, had appeared to Abram three times already [Genesis 12:7; 13:16; 15:5]. This fourth appearance would have a clearer and more definite purpose. In all the previous appearances, God had stood out as the contracting party, conveying blessings to Abram and not requiring any distinct conditions on his part [v. 4].) There is a gradual progress in the revelation of God's will to His people.

The change of Abram's name to 'Abraham' should also be noted—from Abram, a 'high father' to Abraham, 'father of a multitude of nations' [v. 5]. A change of name in Eastern countries "is an advertisement of some new circumstance in the history, rank or religion of the individual who bears it". Moreover, this changing of his name was a seal to confirm God's promise to him. Indeed, this promise was fulfilled to the very letter.

Abraham would be the progenitor of kings and great nations. His descendants would fill prominent places in the history of mankind. It is biblical to say that the Jewish nation is the rightful owner of the land now called Palestine [v. 7–8]. However, the ultimate reference of God's promise is in the spiritual realm, where the true church of God will see multitudes added and the true King, Jesus Christ, will come again.

Have you been seeking to know the will of the Lord in your life? If you have prayed in faith and now have submitted to His revelation, you can be sure to hear His voice soon and be directed into His perfect will.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 4
PSALMS 7-8**

PRAYER

O Lord, let me not lean unto my own understanding but humbly submit myself to Thy way.

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 17:9–14

LESSON

The sign of the covenant

VERSE 9

And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

The covenant that God made with Abraham was now to be ratified with an additional confirmation through a sacrament: circumcision. It was considered a seal—God’s signature to the covenant. This would be the closing act to the promise that was made. It was also a sign to guarantee that God’s blessings would be bestowed on those who obey.

This rite of circumcision was to be performed by Abraham [v. 9]. He had to subject himself and his seed—even his servants and their children—to this outward sign of the covenant [v. 12]. It became clear that God’s promised blessings would not be restricted only to Abraham and his seed but also “strangers” [v. 27] and all who were associated with him. This is a good indication that the blessings of Abraham should come on all who by faith receive Christ [Romans 4:9–11].

Notably, God is pleased, as remarked by Robert Candlish, to “perpetuate religion by means of the family relation.” Even as Abraham was bound to administer this rite to those who might seem unconscious of its true meaning, parents today also ‘compel’ their children through Christian baptism that they also may enjoy the religious privileges invoked in that sacred name.

God is always ready to bless His people and their children through their obedience to His commandments and faith in His covenant. Pray that you will prove yourself worthy of the pronounced benediction through Christ and that you will remain true and faithful to Him alone.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 5
PSALM 9

PRAYER

Abba Father, thank You for adopting me into Your family.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 17:15–16***LESSON****Not Sarai but Sarah****VERSE 15**

And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be.

Here, God was slowly but surely revealing the covenant promise to Abraham made long ago in a more distinct manner. The announcement was no more in a vague form. For the first time, Abraham was informed that it was to be a child of Sarah. She would live up to her name, which meant ‘princess’, indicating that royal families would spring from her [v. 16].

Abraham’s attempt to ‘help’ God had failed miserably. God’s plan was not as expected by him. He had first thought God was going to bless him through his firstborn, Ishmael. Instead, the promised seed was to be born of Sarah. Abraham had one lesson to learn: God is quite independent of man. He does not need our suggestions or advice.

When one tries to reason in his own counsel concerning what God will do or reveal, he will be disappointed, for “it is the glory of God to conceal a thing” [Proverbs 25:2]. Very often, God hides His purposes from us until the time is right for Him to reveal them to us more clearly. As such, we are called upon to humbly depend on Him Who makes no mistake.

It is best to take God at His word than to rest on your own understanding and interpretation of events that unfold before us. Faith in God must not be hampered by human feelings. Soon, the light will shine for us to see and appreciate the design of God, which tend to His glory and our blessings.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 6
PSALM 10

PRAYER

Gracious Father, grant me Thy help to cast the weakness of my doubt and fear so that I may simply trust in Thee.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 17:16***LESSON****The promise of a son****VERSE 16**

*And I will bless her, and
give thee a son also of her:
yea, I will bless her, and
she shall be a mother of
nations; kings of people
shall be of her.*

Abram was renamed 'Abraham', which meant 'father of a multitude of nations', whereas Sarai was to change her name to 'Sarah' which meant 'princess'. God said that Sarah would be the mother of all nations and kings of people shall be of her. Can this be true? Both Abraham and Sarah were very old at that point of time. Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 89 years old.

God promised Sarah a great blessing through Abraham's son. To man, this was an impossibility. Yet it was indeed a great promise of covenant. With God, everything is possible. He created the universe out of nothing. Adam was created out of dust and God breathed life into him.

Man is different from the rest of creation. We are created in the image of God. God chose to bless Abraham, and Abraham simply trusted God and followed his call in faith.

Out of this promise, God also provided another son in this lineage. This son is Jesus Christ. In human genealogy, Jesus came from David, who was a direct descendant of this heritage. Jesus is the Saviour of the world. This being so, all nations will be His. Sarah is indeed the mother of nations through this connection to all those who call upon the name of God the Father. This is the greatest blessing to Abraham and Sarah and to mankind indeed. Jesus is also known as the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is God Himself in human form. All Glory to His Name.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 7
PSALMS 11-12**

THOUGHT

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. – Matthew 19:26

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 17:17–19***LESSON****Abraham laughs****VERSE 19**

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

Was this a joke? No! God was serious in dealing with Abraham and in establishing a covenant with him. A covenant is different from an agreement. In an agreement, both parties have to participate and act upon agreed terms. A simple example would be a sales agreement. As long as a buyer pays, the seller is obliged to provide a service or an item. In a covenant, only one party is active.

Abraham did nothing but was promised that he would be father to many nations through a son to be born. This son was Isaac (meaning 'laughter'). More importantly, God made the covenant everlasting through another son from this lineage: Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Saviour of the world. We are insignificant and have done nothing to deserve this salvation. We are the passive party. Jesus paid for our sins in full when He died in our place. We could never have paid for our sins or done anything to gain a place in heaven.

God dwells in heaven and does not need our company. However, He is gracious to extend an invitation for us to dwell with Him there. It is a sinless place. For this reason, we cannot get there unless we are sinless. Everyone has sin and there is nothing we can do to get rid of our sins. In such a scenario, it is impossible for us to get to heaven.

That is why Jesus had to die for us. Those who trust in Him will be counted as sinless. This is the principle and the everlasting covenant that God set with Abraham.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 8
PSALMS 13–14

THOUGHT

With God, all things are possible.

BIBLE LESSON

Genesis 17:20–22

LESSON

Ishmael and Isaac

VERSE 21

But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

God was specific in His promise to Abraham. He told Abraham that he would be a father of a son the year after. Abraham would be 100 years old while Sarah would be 90 then. God honours every word He says. Everything changes but God never changes. He means what he says and says what He means.

Abraham bargained with God to bless Ishmael instead. While it was true that God blessed Ishmael as the father of 12 tribes, he was not the chosen one. Ishmael would be fruitful and multiply exceedingly. (Ishmael is the father of the Arabs, a large population.) Ishmael was born of Abraham and Hagar because of his impatience in waiting for God's blessing.

It was not God's plan. It was a human plan that went wrong. Though God blessed Ishmael, the descendants of Ishmael (Arabs) and Isaac (Israelites) have been fighting till today. This fighting could have been avoided had Abraham waited upon God. We should wait upon God for His perfect timing and not take things into our own hands. The disobedience of Adam caused man to fall and the disobedience of Abraham caused fighting in the family.

God now reveals His blessings upon Abraham through Isaac. By faith, Abraham accepted God's blessing without further questions. This time he made sure that he obeyed God and in so doing Sarah conceived Isaac. By the grace of God, He is able to make right that which man has done wrong. The everlasting covenant included Jesus as a descendant of Isaac. Through the obedience of Jesus, man now has an opportunity to reconcile with God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 9
PSALMS 15–16

THOUGHT

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. – John 4:24

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 17:23–27***LESSON****Abraham's circumcision****VERSE 27**

And all the men of his house, born in the house, and bought with money of the stranger, were circumcised with him.

We are frail and sometimes need physical reminders to jolt our memory. We need to be reminded that we are sanctified. We are a peculiar people, set aside away from the world. We are different because soon we will be dwelling in heaven with God. Abraham was instructed to be circumcised to show that he was sanctified.

We now replace circumcision with baptism. Both circumcision and baptism do not make anyone holier. Neither does it make anyone a better follower of God. Our salvation does not depend on either of these. Baptism reminds us that we now belong to God and we declare it openly. We show that we are not ashamed to acknowledge that Jesus is our Saviour and our Lord. It reminds the believer of the commitment to live a godly life because each believer is sanctified.

Often times, some family members have doubts about another member of their family being a Christian. Confessing Jesus to be their Saviour out of their own mouths before the baptism gives an assurance that Christianity is not forced upon anyone. We accept Christ out of our own will through the faith given by God.

All males in the household of Abraham were circumcised. For this reason, we have infant baptism as well. Again we have to realise that baptism itself does not save. Infant baptism then is a reminder to the parents of their commitment to raise their children to their best ability and to introduce Jesus into their daily lives. Parents also have to set an example of a God-honouring life.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 10
PSALM 17**

THOUGHT

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. – Acts 26:18

BIBLE LESSON

Genesis 18:1–8

LESSON

Heavenly visitors

VERSE 2

And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground,

Abraham was in his tent and saw three men approaching out of nowhere in the heat of the day. By faith Abraham rushed towards the strangers. Despite not knowing who these people were, Abraham extended the most hospitable welcome, as was his nature—friendly and generous.

Everything that we have is from God. If we are good stewards, God will continue to bless us. We are to use our possessions and talents for the glory of God. Besides being generous, Abraham was also meek, as seen in later chapters in his dealings with Lot. And God blessed Abraham more than Lot. Abraham realised that God would bless him more in the future and God did.

Abraham not only gave but he also gave of his best. When we give our tithes, remember that God allows us to keep what we want. He let us make the decision. He does not need our gifts but out of our expression of gratitude and love, we give back a minor share but keep the major share of the blessings. What a great deal we get from God!

Once you have given, they do not belong to you anymore. They have been returned to God. That is the real spirit of giving. God does not dictate how we use the blessings He bestowed on us. Why should you then want to control the use on the gifts after they have left your hands? Remember that you cannot out-give God, Who is the source of all blessings.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 11
PSALM 18

THOUGHT

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
– Hebrews 13:2

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 18:9–15

LESSON
Sarah laughed

VERSE 14

Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

God created man and has given us a mind to reason and to think. We are to use this faculty to understand God's teaching and to serve Him. However, we have often used this to our downfall.

Out of pride, we think that we are the master. We compare ourselves against everything that we can see visually. We forget that man is finite while God is infinite. God only reveals to us what we need to know. He has kept the majority of knowledge from us. If He had told us, we would either not believe or be unable to comprehend.

The visitors informed Abraham that he would have a son through Sarah. One of the visitors was identified as the Lord Himself. This is the very God Himself appearing to Abraham in the form of a man. Sadly, Abraham's first reaction was disbelief and he laughed. He asked how was it possible now that both he and Sarah were old [Genesis 17:17]. When Sarah heard that she was about to give birth to Isaac, she also laughed. It was not a laugh of joy but rather a laugh of doubt. She concluded that it was not possible because she was already past the age of child bearing.

Did the Lord see or hear her laugh? Sarah was after all behind the tent. Of course He did! Nothing can be hidden from God. Worse still, when Sarah was asked as to why she laughed, she denied having done so. We cannot deny our deeds or words to man. We cannot even deny our thoughts to God for He knows everything.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 12
PSALM 19

THOUGHT

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? – John 3:12

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 18:16–22***LESSON****He will command his children****VERSE 19**

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgement; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

God blessed Abraham with confidence that he would obey God's commandment to control his children. He would have to teach them to follow after God, which he did. Isaac became a godly man. Abraham would be the father of nations (Israel and the Arabian countries) and Isaac, the father of a great and mighty nation (Israel).

A strong country is built by strong families. A strong family is the result of a God-fearing head leading the other members. Abraham is a good example of such a leader. The sad fact that slips away from man is that we lack discipline at home, which results in broken and chaotic families. Laws that are condoned by the world and those that contradict God's teaching are soon introduced into God's covenant families.

God gives us explicit commands on how a family should be knitted. A family should only have one father and one mother. Any addition to this equation is an extra-marital relationship, which is not endorsed by God. There will be chaos in the family otherwise. The Bible has recorded for us of such family fights. God tolerated polygamy as written in the Bible because of His grace and not that He approves of such a practice. There can be no happy ending in a polygamous family.

If Abraham had only Sarah as his wife, there would be no family fights between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael. These are precious lessons we should learn and pass on to our children.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

LEVITICUS 13
PSALMS 20–21

THOUGHT

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. – Proverbs 22:6

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 18:23–33***LESSON****Abraham's bargain****VERSE 32**

And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

The crying sins of Sodom had reached heaven, and it brought the Lord down from heaven to visit it with judgement. The Lord first visited Abraham. While the angels departed for Sodom, Abraham was left standing alone before God.

Abraham interceded for all the inhabitants of Sodom, even the wicked, that they might not be destroyed for the sake of 50 righteous among them. God granted him his request, and Abraham perceived, by the Lord's answer, that there were not even 50 righteous persons in the city. He then pleaded for the sake of 45. Having received a favourable reply, he took a bolder step of faith, reducing the number by 10. Encouraged by such a gracious answer to stay judgement for the sake of 40 righteous, he fearfully took yet another step to plead for 30 righteous' sake. The Lord again gave in to his request, and Abraham furthered his petition for 20. Upon receiving the same prompt and favourable response, he made another and final advance in his plea for the sake of 10 righteous men in the city.

Six times and with a steady advance, Abraham urged his prayer, and each time, God's gracious answer was the encouragement to ask for more. Though God eventually destroyed Sodom, He went further than His promise. He saved Lot's family.

Abraham was urged to this boldness by his long acquaintance with God, Who had communicated to him the secrets of His goodness, and now of His judgements. When we have known God long enough, there are no favours too large for us to ask of Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 14
PSALM 22

THOUGHT

This prayer of Abraham is the first long prayer recorded in Scripture, and the first example of an intercessory prayer. It is the most remarkable human intercession to be found in the pages of the Bible (Preacher's homiletic commentary).

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 19:1–3***LESSON****The visit of angels****VERSE 1**

*And there came two angels
to Sodom at even; and Lot
sat in the gate of Sodom:
and Lot seeing them rose
up to meet them; and he
bowed himself with his face
toward the ground;*

These angels were two of the three that had just before been with Abraham. They were sent to execute God's purpose concerning Sodom. When they came, Lot met them, "bowed himself to the ground, as was the custom of the eastern countries to bow very low in their civil respects to men, especially to great personages. Lot took these to be by their goodly looks and by their dress, who appeared with majesty in their countenances" (Gill).

He urged these strangers to come into his house. When they declined the first acceptance of it, (which is the common usage of modesty), their refusal did make him more importunate; partly because he would not have them fall into the hands of the wicked Sodomites, who might abuse them, and partly because he was desirous of their company and converse.

Instead of proceeding forward to a street in the city, they turned in and entered his house: feigning ignorance of the manners and behaviour of the men of Sodom, as if they might be safe from their insults in the streets in the night. The angels were more sumptuously entertained than was customary. He baked cakes and prepared a plentiful feast. The angels ate, not that they had any need to do so but because it was time to manifest of their celestial nature.

Hebrews 12:3 exhorted us to be given to hospitality, and especially to strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares, as in the case of Abraham and Lot.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 15
PSALMS 23–24

THOUGHT

For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. – Matthew 25:35–36

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 19:4–11

LESSON
**The wicked men of
 Sodom**

VERSE 4

*But before they lay down,
 the men of the city, even the
 men of Sodom, compassed
 the house round, both old
 and young, all the people
 from every quarter.*

Sodom was full of Sodomites. The sin in which they indulged in had so bad an eminence that it derives its very name from this infamous place. Their wickedness was unabated. They grew worse and worse, descending to the lowest depths of sin and vice. All classes and all ages were infected by the prevailing vices and sins.

With the exception of righteous Lot and his family, none escaped from the mire and stink of this greatest of pollution. The saddest fact of all was that the ‘young’ had also imbibed evil principles and were corrupted in their ways. They did not even seek to hide their sins. Instead, they openly avowed their love of deeds against the use of nature. They desired Lot to give up the strangers sheltered under his roof to their vile lusts.

What must have been the extent of its abominations, when the aged, instead of restraining the young, were actually urging them forward in the course of their own pernicious example. By divine intervention, these wicked men were stricken with blindness to restrain them from furthering their vile unnatural lusts. Nevertheless, they persisted in their insane endeavour to continue their wickedness, wearying themselves to find the door.

Even the refining influences of modern civilisation cannot root out these same degrading forms of vice. This unnatural practice prevails in our generation, even finding acceptance in society. Only fire and brimstone from heaven can destroy this sin. Even thus shall it be in the day when Christ returns to judge the world.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 16
PSALM 25

THOUGHT

Read Romans 1:26–27.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 19:12–14***LESSON****Lot mocked****VERSE 14**

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.

God sends judgement upon wicked nations only after they fail to heed all admonitions and chastisements. We read of the pronouncement of impending divine judgement by the angels in this chapter. Lot was warned to flee from the wrath to come. Opportunity was extended to his near relations before the terrible destruction.

The angelic message was desperate and urgent. Lot went forth at an unusual hour of the night to warn those who were bound to him by the ties of natural relationship. (Such is the mercy of divine proceeding). He warned them with intense appeal and great earnestness; his manner of expression was startling and quickening. He warned them like a prophet and advised them like a father with moving affection, imploring them to obey his message. But it was in vain. He seemed to them as if he mocked, and they did more than seem to him to mock again. His message was received with derision.

The longsuffering of God is great; it waits, but there must be an end. If we know all that God knows and see all that He sees of the wickedness of mankind, we would only wonder at His patience instead of being distressed by the rigour of His judgements.

The derisive mirth and scorn of sinners against the Gospel preached to them will only become their sad memories in the world to come. The most faithful preaching may, in many instances, fail to fetch fruit, for besides the opposing spiritual forces, we have to also deal with the perversity of the human will.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

LEVITICUS 17
PSALMS 26–27

THOUGHT

Mocking is the last refuge of those who oppose the truth.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 19:15–22***LESSON****Lot's plea****VERSE 20**

Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.

Lot's commendable faith was mingled with some degree of human infirmity. He was disposed to linger and had to be hastened by the angels. Though prepared to obey the divine summons, he still possessed a strong repugnance to instantaneous flight. It was not solely the thought of losing all his worldly substance that made him linger but perhaps his heart was agonised by the thought of leaving many relatives behind him to perish in the perdition of the city.

This strong inner conflict caused him to loiter and linger. As a result, his deliverers had to resort to a gracious violence, compelling him lovingly to hasten his departure. With powerful hands laying on Lot and his family, the angels dragged them along.

His appointed place of safety was to flee to the mountain, yet Lot begged for a city of refuge in Zoar (a little one). He insisted much in his petition upon the smallness of the place. God marvellously accepted his demand, though there was much infirmity in it. Sodom's ruin was suspended till he was safe.

Now this shows how God deals with our soul. We use large language and talk of self-sacrifice, total obedience and full devotion, "yet there has always been a secret reservation of some small Zoar; God still accepts. He leaves us some human affection, something to remind us of our earthly home. He weans us by degrees, that so, step by step, leaving earth behind, we may ascend the mountain top, and want nothing but the lovely love of God" (Robertson).

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

LEVITICUS 18
PSALMS 28–29

THOUGHT

The love of God not only seeks us and warns us of our danger, but also draws us by a sweet compulsion to flee from the wrath to come.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 19:23–29***LESSON****Lot's wife****VERSE 26**

But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

The sad story of Lot's wife is a fearful warning to backsliders. Her awful doom shows us how God regards this sin. She perished after she enjoyed great spiritual privileges in godly relations; angels came to her habitation. They persuaded and enabled her to come out from the ungodly, and to escape the lust and corruption that was Sodom.

While fleeing towards safety in the mountain, she wavered, stopped by the way and shrank from the grasp of her angel-conductor, leaving her husband to go on his way alone. The city looked as beautiful as ever when the sun rose upon it on that fateful day. She looked back with regret and affection at the city. She cleaved to her old home. Her heart was in Sodom, and Sodom was in her heart. She stood still, and looked back with a longing heart on what she had left behind. The storm suddenly came. She was a little too far from Zoar, and a little too near to Sodom. She became scorched and encrusted by the burning flood, and remained on the spot—a petrified monument of divine justice.

This may be deemed a hard fate for a mere glance of the eye but her glance was an indication of unbelief and a lingering desire to return. It was a rebellion against an express mandate of heaven [v. 17]. God would not connive at her disobedience.

Her example is still preserved in sacred history as a warning to all who turn back from the ways of God. She persists throughout the ages as 'a pillar of salt.'

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 19
PSALM 30

THOUGHT

Lest we forget God and backslide, remember Lot's wife.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 19:30–38***LESSON****Lot's daughters****VERSE 37**

And the firstborn bare a son, and called his name Moab: the same is the father of the Moabites unto this day.

In this tragic final passage of Scripture relating the life of “righteous Lot” [2 Peter 2:8], we read of how Lot’s two daughters got him drunk on wine, engaged in sexual intercourse with him on two successive nights, became pregnant, and eventually gave birth to two sons, Moab and Benammi.

While the Bible did not record any commentary on the sinfulness of the daughters’ actions, commentators generally condemn their scheme as utterly depraved and immoral, and due mainly to their being brought up in an environment that was “only evil continually” [Genesis 6:5]. It is also held as a warning of the terrible consequences that sin in a believer’s life can have on our children.

Some commentators, though, are sympathetic and try to offer some justification in the minds of Lot’s daughters. Given the awesome and powerful events that the family had just experienced in a relatively short time, they may well have believed that the rest of humanity had been destroyed. Hence their belief that “there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth.”

Still, the closing verses offer some consolation. God is in sovereign control of the affairs of sinful men. While Lot’s daughters may have “thought evil, God meant it unto good” [Genesis 50:20], out of the first unholy union came a man, Moab, whose descendants included one of the most beloved and admired women of the human race, one who would become the great grandmother of King David, from whose line would come the Messiah.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 20
PSALM 31

THOUGHT

God never moves without purpose or plan.

BIBLE LESSON

Genesis 20:1–8

LESSON

Abraham's lie

VERSE 6

*And God said unto him
in a dream, Yea, I know
that thou didst this in
the integrity of thy heart;
for I also withheld thee
from sinning against me:
therefore suffered I thee not
to touch her.*

There are a number of useful and even interesting lessons that we can glean from today's passage. Firstly, we see that the Holy Spirit does not gloss over the sins and shortcomings of even the greatest of saints.

Abraham, after all, was a man of like passions as we are. He stumbled and fell like we do. Here, he repeated the same sin that he had committed years ago in Egypt, and again out of fear for his own life.

Secondly, we see God's grace and loving kindness towards His beloved servant in intervening and supernaturally restraining Abimelech from crossing the fatal line. Thirdly, in spite of Abraham's sin, God still regarded him as His prophet [v. 7] and assigned him the role of interceding on behalf of Abimelech and his people. Fourthly, we realise that God's standard on the matter of marital purity is high and unchanging. To take another man's wife is a sin worthy of death in God's moral code. This is an important reminder for this present age where marital infidelity is no longer frowned upon by a large segment of society.

Finally, those of us who suffer from various infirmities of the body can take comfort in Christ's promise to give us a glorious new body someday. God had obviously renewed 90-year-old Sarah's youth, in readiness of her forthcoming role as a mother, to the extent that a hot-blooded pagan king like Abimelech was stricken by her beauty and wanted to add her to his harem.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 21
PSALM 32

REMINDER

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. – 1 Corinthians 10:12

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 20:9–16

LESSON
Abraham's excuse

VERSE 9

Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.

It is shameful when Christians are caught telling lies. It is even worse if the one who caught us is an unbeliever. Such was the unenviable position that Abraham found himself in when King Abimelech summoned him and confronted him about the lie that he had told concerning his relationship with Sarah. His lie had in fact caused others to sin. It almost led a king to commit adultery with Abraham's wife. Likewise, Sarah had been dishonoured, having been led to almost committing adultery with another man.

Thus cornered and rebuked, and still unaware of the dream that God had given to Abimelech the night before, Abraham confessed his sin, his fear for his life, and his not trusting God to take care of him and Sarah. He confessed his sin of lying and of twisting the truth and telling half-truths. And Abraham confessed his sin of misusing and exploiting people [v. 13].

But we thank God that He is a loving and merciful God whose anger endures but for a moment. Throughout that sordid episode, He had kept Abraham secure. After God had lovingly admonished His servant, He restored him. The king even gave him several herds of animals, a thousand pieces of silver as restitution for Sarah, as well as the right to settle wherever he wished in the land of the Philistines.

All things had worked out for good for Abraham and Sarah. But notice that this came about only after Abraham had repented and confessed his sin.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 22
PSALM 33

REMINDER

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. – Proverbs 28:13

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 20:17–18***LESSON****Abraham's prayer****VERSE 17**

*So Abraham prayed unto
God: and God healed
Abimelech, and his wife,
and his maidservants; and
they bare children.*

Christians do sin and commit offences, some of which bring harm to others. When that happens, we must pray for those whom we have injured and beg God to obliterate from their minds any bad impressions they have not only of us but of the God we worship, if they are unbelievers. And this was what Abraham did. He prayed to God to remove the judgements on Abimelech and his household, judgement that he himself had been instrumental in procuring.

We are not told what disease struck Abimelech, his wife and his maidservants but we know it resulted in their inability to conceive. The motive is obvious. The promised Seed was to come through Sarah. The whole preceding incident was designed by the evil one either to prevent the birth of Isaac or to so discredit that birth so that nobody would ever be able to brush off the insinuation that Isaac was Abimelech's son, not Abraham's.

Even though Abimelech had never touched Sarah, the subtle insinuations might still have remained. To safeguard Sarah, as well as to silence any such suspicions, God acted as He did. He rendered sterile and barren every woman in Abimelech's household. And the curse of sterility remained until such time as Abraham prayed for its removal.

Earlier, Abimelech had given Abraham a large gift as a "covering of the eyes" [v. 16]. It was a peace offering to cover up the offence, a justice to Sarah's good name and character. Abimelech was afterwards greatly blessed for his kindness to Abraham.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 23
PSALM 34

THOUGHT

The effect of Abraham's prayer is an illustration of salvation, which is the healing of the soul of those diseases sin has brought upon it.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 21:1–8***LESSON****The birth of Isaac****VERSE 1**

*And the LORD visited Sarah
as he had said, and the
LORD did unto Sarah as he
had spoken.*

After 25 long years, Sarah bore Abraham their promised son, the son from whom kings and nations were to be born, and from whom the Saviour of the world was to come. Notice the emphasis in the two opening verses on God's keeping of His Word; "as He had said", "as He had spoken" and "which God had spoken to him". God's promises never fail. He keeps His Word.

But why did God wait so long? Firstly He wanted to test and build up Abraham's faith. Paul puts it this way: "He [Abraham] staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" [Romans 4:20–21].

Secondly, all glory should be due to God, since it was humanly impossible for the hundred-year-old body of Abraham and 90-year-old body of Sarah to bear children. Finally, this miraculous quickening of the aged couple's bodies which, conception-wise, were as good as dead, provided a picture of the miraculous resurrection that our Lord will one day perform on those of us who have put their trust in Him.

The lesson for us Christians is this. We must not be slothful but be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" [Hebrews 6:12]. God has given us many precious promises in His Word. We need to have patience so that "after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" [Hebrews 10:36].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 24
PSALM 35

REMINDER

**And this is the promise that he hath promised us,
even eternal life. – 1 John 2:25**

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 21:9–16***LESSON****Abraham's expulsion****VERSE 12**

And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Our Lord once made a somewhat surprising statement: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division" [Luke 12:51]. In a similar manner, though the birth of Isaac brought much joy to Abraham, it also brought division to his family. Sarah's demand that he cast out Ishmael caused much anguish. Yet God endorsed this seemingly cruel decision. Why?

Ishmael needed to be sent away not so much because of his jealousy, rebellious attitude and resentment towards Isaac but rather he and Isaac represented two opposing natures. Sarah's declaration [v. 10] was typical in the sense that it had a spiritual parallel in the Christian's life.

From beginning to end, Abraham's relationship with Hagar had been of the flesh. Hence, Ishmael represented our carnal, old nature. Isaac was the promised seed through whom the nations of the earth will be blessed spiritually. He represented "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" [Ephesians 4:24]. The birth of the new demands the expulsion of the old.

Nevertheless, God saw Abraham's struggle and heard his prayers and God comforted him with His Word. God reminded Abraham of His great purpose in Isaac and assured him that Ishmael would be looked after and richly blessed and would become a great nation of people, too. God's answer to conflict is the same for every generation, and for every one of us. The answer is found in God's Word, God's purpose and God's assurance of His blessings.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 25
PSALM 36**

THOUGHT

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. – Galatians 4:31

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 21:17–21***LESSON****Hagar and Ishmael sent
away****VERSE 18***Arise, lift up the lad, and
hold him in thine hand;
for I will make him a great
nation.*

Abraham was sad because it was against his wish to send Hagar and Ishmael away. But God said to him, “Let it not be a grief to you because of the boy and Hagar his mother; give ear to whatever Sarah says to you, because it is from Isaac that your seed will take its name. And I will make a nation of the son of your servant-woman, because he is your seed” [v. 12–13, paraphrased].

Abraham, being faithful, heeded God’s advice. It was clear that Abraham did not want to give up Ishmael out of love for him. Perhaps it was his ‘back-up plan’. If something were to happen to Isaac, there would always be Ishmael. But God made it clear that there was to be no back-up plan for Abraham, other than God Himself. Hagar and Ishmael had to be sent away.

Yet this is not the last we hear of Hagar and Ishmael. We read that God met them in their despair. He provided sustenance for them and promised again that Ishmael would be a great nation [Genesis 21:13].

Because man had again carried out his own will, there is now conflict between two nations. Yet we must also remember that this division is also spiritual. The Apostle Paul used this event to full effect when confronting the Jewish legalists [Galatians 4:21–31]. They claimed Abraham as their father. Paul wanted to know who their mother was, Hagar or Sarah. Ishmael was born of a slave according to the flesh. Isaac was born of a freewoman, and born according to promise.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 26
PSALM 37

THOUGHT

But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. – Romans 2:29

BIBLE LESSON**Genesis 21:22–26****LESSON****Abraham's covenant with Abimelech****VERSE 23**

Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned.

Abimelech, accompanied by Phichol, his commander-in-chief, proposed to enter into a treaty with Abraham. They were sure God was with Abraham in all that he did.

Various circumstances concurred to produce this conviction in Abimelech. The never-to-be-forgotten appearance of God to him in a dream interposing on behalf of Abraham, the birth of Isaac, the consequent certainty of his having an heir, and the growing retinue and affluence of one who, some 10 years before, could lead out a trained band of 318 men-at-arms, were sufficient to prove that God was the source of his strength. Such a man would be formidable as a foe but serviceable as an ally. It was a sound strategy for Abimelech to approach Abraham and ask him to swear by God not to deal falsely with him, his sons and descendants.

Abraham was perfectly ready to agree to this, but first of all he complained about a well that Abimelech's men had stolen. They had unjustly appropriated the well for themselves. Abimelech replied that this act of violence had never been made known to him till that day, and as a matter of course commanded the well to be returned.

God in His providence favour His people and bless them and sometimes their neighbours cannot but take notice of it. Their affairs visibly prosper, and they have such remarkable success in their undertakings that a confession is extorted from all about them of God's presence with them.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

LEVITICUS 27
PSALM 38

THOUGHT

Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me. – Psalm 86:17

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 21:27–34***LESSON****Honouring of a covenant
by both parties****VERSE 29**

*And Abimelech said unto
Abraham, What mean
these seven ewe lambs
which thou hast set by
thyself?*

After the settlement of the issue regarding the well, the treaty (covenant) was concluded. Abraham presented the king with sheep and oxen, as a material pledge that he would reciprocate the kindness shown, and live in friendship with the king and his descendants.

Out of the gift, he selected seven lambs and set them by themselves. When Abimelech inquired what they were, he told him to take them from his hand that they might be to him (Abraham) for a witness that he had dug the well. It was not to redeem the well but to secure the well as his property against any fresh claims on the part of the Philistines. By the acceptance of it, Abraham's right of possession was practically and solemnly acknowledged. It was justice, as well as wisdom, to do thus, that the circumstance might be perpetually remembered.

Abraham ratified the covenant by an oath, and registered it by giving a new name to the place, 'Beer-sheba', or 'the well of the oath', in remembrance of the covenant they swore to, that they might be ever mindful of it. It was also known as 'the well of seven', in remembrance of the seven lambs given to Abimelech, as a confirmation of Abraham's title to that well.

It was also here that Abraham planted a tamarisk and called upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God, "as the everlasting Vindicator of the faith of treaties, and as the infallible Source of the believers' rest and peace" (Murphy).

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS I
PSALM 39

THOUGHT

"And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days" [Genesis 21:34]. When God is a witness of an agreement, we can be sure that the parties involved will honour it.

BIBLE LESSON

Genesis 22:1

LESSON

Testing Abraham

VERSE 1

And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

Today we read of a well-known passage in the Bible: the sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah by his father, Abraham. It is a story of faith that is much celebrated and widely quoted, and recorded for us in the Bible's 'Hall of Fame' in Hebrews 11.

Yet we read in today's verse that this glorious episode came very suddenly. Isaac was born, the family had regained harmony at least for a moment after Hagar and Ishmael had been sent away, and the covenant at Beer-sheba was signed. But just when we think that things would be going to be well after this, the next chapter tells us of God's testing of Abraham.

This challenge was to bring Abraham out of his comfort zone. In fact, it would bring most of us way out of our comfort zones if we were in the shoes of Abraham. Abraham was to sacrifice his beloved son as a burnt offering to God.

How would the faithful Abraham respond? This can be applied to today's context. When everything seems to go well in life, we thank and praise God for it. Sometimes we even take everything for granted and become complacent. How would you respond when God calls you in your prosperity to make such a sacrifice? Will you respond as spontaneously as how Abraham did in today's verse? After the response, would you be ready to take up the challenge that God has set before you, even at the expense of your most prized possession?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 2
PSALMS 40-41

THOUGHT

Meditate on Hebrews 11:17-19.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 22:2–6***LESSON****Abraham's sacrifice****VERSE 6**

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

The very first sacrifice that Abraham had to make was to leave his home and go to a place unknown to him [Genesis 12:1]. The second test seems to be very absurd indeed: to sacrifice his son as a burnt offering. Is not this strictly against what God had commanded regarding the shedding of human blood [Genesis 9:5–6]? Now can the unchangeable God contradict Himself? He who hates robbery for burnt offering [Isaiah 61:8] cannot delight in murder.

How would it conflict with the natural affection for his son? It would be not only murder but the worst of murders. Yet was it not said that in Isaac shall thy seed be called? But what comes of that seed, and that promise if Isaac were killed?

God gave Abraham no reason for it. When Ishmael was to be cast out, a just cause was assigned, which satisfied Abraham. But here Isaac must die, and Abraham must kill him. Neither one nor the other must know why or wherefore.

Abraham rose early, and set himself about the execution of God's command. He did not delay, did not demur and did not take time to deliberate. The command was peremptory and would not entertain any debate. As they went up the hill, Isaac asked: "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together" [v. 7–8].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 3
PSALMS 42–43

THOUGHT

We never know how sweet our blessings are until we yield them to God. There is no man that hath left anything or any person for Christ's sake and the Gospel's who will not receive a hundred-fold more in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 22:7–12

LESSON
God's provision

VERSE 8

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

The reply of Abraham was prophetic in that he referred to the Messiah, the Lamb of God, as the Apostle John described, “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” [John 1:29].

God, Who had provided in council and covenant before the world was; and Who in promise, type, and figure, was slain from the foundation of the world, [Revelation 13:8]; and whom in due time would send Him into the world [John 10:36], make Him an offering for sin [Isaiah 53:10], and accept of Him in the room and stead of His people (and this was a provision that could only be made by the Lord), was the produce of His infinite wisdom and the fruit of His grace, favour, and goodwill and of which Abraham had a clear sight and strong persuasion, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” [John 8:56].

These are some details of the Abrahamic covenant. (a) God started His covenant with Abraham when he was living in Ur of the Chaldeans, promising a land for his descendants and also blessing to the nations of the world [Genesis 12:1–3]. (b) The covenant was renewed when Abraham was 99 years old, changing his name to ‘Abraham’ from ‘Abram’. The sign of the covenant was circumcision [Genesis 17:1–17]. (c) The covenant was confirmed because of Abraham’s obedience [Genesis 22:15–18].

God always keeps His promises [Joshua 21:43–45] and the complete fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant was Christ [Galatians 3:16].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 4
PSALM 44

THOUGHT

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, – 1 Peter 1:19–20

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 22:13–14***LESSON****Jehovah Jireh****VERSE 14**

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

Abraham's offering of his son Isaac is a parallel of the offering by God of His one and only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham was asked to give up his most treasured gift as a sacrifice to God and he willingly obeyed, with great faith. Through the miraculous interposition of heaven, God provided a ram as a substitute for Isaac. Similarly, Jesus Christ was God's substitution for mankind.

In this experience, Abraham saw Christ, as Jesus told the unbelieving Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" [John 8:56]. Jesus was nailed on the Cross, as a substitute for all mankind, and shed His precious blood to wash away our sins.

By the grace of God we are now able to receive His salvation through faith. We ought to be truly grateful for God's greatest love of sacrifice. Abraham remembered the goodness of God. He called Mt Moriah 'Jehovah-Jireh', or 'The Lord will Provide'. We can trust God to deliver us. As the El-Shaddai, the All-sufficient, God has said, "I will never leave you, nor will I forsake you." Our God is a sure and willing Provider. We should wait patiently for Him to provide according to His will and His time. Remember that God's infinite provision is always greater than our finite problems. We should rest in Him and count our blessings in peace.

Search your heart and ask if you have surrendered all unto the Lord. What is your 'Isaac' that you need to lay on the altar? Learn from Abraham. Obey and trust in the Lord. Praise the Lord for His faithfulness!

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 5
PSALM 45**

THOUGHT

**But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. –
Philippians 4:19**

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 22:15–19***LESSON****God's blessing****VERSE 17**

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

God made a vital oath with Abraham. It is the promise of salvation to all of us who are His faithful believers. God fulfils every promise that He makes. God's promise is immutable and He always honours it.

Abraham had received abundant blessings—both temporal and spiritual—because he obeyed the voice of God. We are to be like Abraham, full of reverence for and obedience to God and willingly surrendering all that we have for the Lord, as He is the One Who gave us our lives and our earthly belongings. We shall then receive the blessings of Abraham, which was to come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ [Galatians 3:14].

It is the will of God for His spiritual seeds to multiply as many as the stars of heaven. His promised seed, the Christ, shall have the spiritual victories and possess the gate of His enemies. All believers, by faith, shall overcome the world and conquer the power of darkness. The greatest promise is the incarnation of Christ. The Messiah shall be the one Who brings the greatest blessings to all the nations of the earth. History has proven that God delivered His greatest promise, sending His only Son as a sacrifice for the salvation of man on the first Christmas.

Thank God for His blessings. Thank God for each new day, for your family, friends, faith and His loving son Jesus Christ, Who died to save us from our sins.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 6
PSALMS 46–47**

THANKS

Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. – 1 Kings 8:56

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 22:20–24***LESSON****God's divine plan****VERSE 20**

And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor;

Abraham received some good news about his brother Nahor, who had settled at Haran. He had no contact with Nahor for some 60 years and was glad to know that Nahor was blessed with a large family.

The introduction of the family tree of Nahor at the end of this chapter (which is placed immediately after the story of the sacrifice of Isaac and followed with God's promise to create a great nation through Isaac) is undoubtedly God's way of preparing for the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, a granddaughter of Nahor. It shows that God had His perfect plan in place. Abraham did not want his son Isaac to marry the heathen race among whom he now dwelt. He was pleased to find out the prosperous family of Nahor and was thankful for the providence of God. He knew in his heart that his never-failing God would fulfil His promises.

Similar to Isaac and Rebekah, God has His divine plan for each one of us. Each of us is unique and precious in the eyes of the Lord, as each of us has an important role to play in His kingdom. God desires for us to walk in His plan. In doing so, His blessings and favour will follow us all our lives. When we fully surrender ourselves and follow His path, our gracious God will provide for us, give us rest, strengthen us and answer our prayers.

Therefore, let us meditate on His Word day and night. Let us walk in the plan that our Almighty God has set before us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 7
PSALM 48

MEDITATION

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. – Psalm 23:6

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 23:1–2***LESSON****Sarah's death****VERSE 2**

And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

Sarah died in the promised land of Canaan at the age of 127 years old. She had been a faithful servant of God. She had willingly followed her husband throughout the years and, like Abraham, believed in God's promises. She was godly and out of her love and respect for God she was submissive to Abraham and called him her master.

Sarah was also blessed to begat Isaac, the promised seed, at an advanced age, and became the mother of all believers [1 Peter 3:6]. The Apostle Paul regarded Sarah highly as she was selected by God to receive His blessings to conceive and bear a son in her old age [Galatians 4:23]. From the story of Sarah, we are encouraged and our faith is strengthened, as nothing is impossible for God.

Abraham loved and cherished his wife deeply and the loss of his lifelong partner caused great grief to him. A strong man like Abraham who went through all adversities in life mourned for the loss of his beloved spouse and wept.

It is human nature to feel sad and weep for the dead but thank God that our faith in the Lord helps to moderate the pain as we are inspired by the hope of a blessed life in heaven. We have the hope of the eternal kingdom of God, a place full of glory and eternal joy, and a place where we will meet Christ and our loved ones in Christ who have gone to heaven before us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 8
PSALM 49

CONSIDERATION

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. – 1 Thessalonians 4:13

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 23:3–9***LESSON****Abraham's purchase****VERSE 4**

*I am a stranger and a
sojourner with you: give
me a possession of a
buryingplace with you, that
I may bury my dead out of
my sight.*

After mourning for Sarah, Abraham stood up and prepared for her burial, as a responsible husband should. He knew that Sarah was with God. As believers, we have the hope of a better life in heaven, with a new and perfect body. There will be no more suffering of pain and sorrow, for the former things are passed away [Revelation 21:4].

Abraham called himself a stranger and a sojourner. He admitted that he was a foreigner and hence he did not own the land. He could be referring to his status as a pilgrim on earth, and he considered home with the Lord as a permanent residence [Hebrews 11:8].

We should learn from Abraham and fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal. Scripture tells us to lay up our treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

Abraham was also courteous in his way of requesting for a land purchase. We read how he politely declined the gracious offer of Ephron to take the cave of Machpelah for free. He was acting fair as he was willing to pay full price for the burial site. We need to act and say the right things in order to bear good testimony for the Lord, so that many more will open their hearts to the Gospel. Live for God before people, and be a positive influence on others.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 9
PSALM 50

PRAYER

Lord, help me lay aside the sinful habits and attitudes that hold me back from being a good witness for You. Help me to stay focused and fix my eyes on You. Help me to be more like Christ.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 23:10–16***LESSON****The field of Machpelah****VERSE 11**

Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead.

Here we learn from Abraham his wisdom and manner in handling a business transaction. Abraham approached the seller of the land with respect and formality. He was prudent to enter into a deal in front of the local community, acting as his witnesses. He wanted Ephron to name the price as he did not want to take advantage of him. Abraham wished to establish an unassailable right to the land by the payment of its value.

The land was worth 400 shekels of silver, a high price in those days. (The wages of a workman for a year was six to eight shekels.) Abraham was willing to pay in full to exchange for his perpetual right. This also reflected Abraham's faith in God, believing that the Promised Land would be kept for him and his descendants. Therefore he purchased a permanent burial site on earth for his family. It is believed that the cave was the burial site later for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rebecca and Leah.

Like Abraham, we should pin our hopes in the Lord for our own Promised Land. We have a greater hope for a better, heavenly home that is perfect and eternal. The very hope that we have of our heavenly mansion, which is prepared for us by the Lord, brings joy in the heart of every believer. Pray for the Lord to strengthen your faith in Him. Pray for His guidance. Pray for your obedience and patience while waiting on the Lord.

Remember that we are but nomads and pilgrims here on the earth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 10
PSALM 51

THOUGHT

But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. – Isaiah 40:31

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 23:17–20***LESSON****A possession of Abraham****VERSE 20**

*And the field, and the
cave that is therein, were
made sure unto Abraham
for a possession of a
buryingplace by the sons of
Heth.*

This chapter is devoted to the description of a legal transaction involving the purchase of a burial plot in Canaan. This is the first spot of land Abraham owned in the Promised Land. God promised all of the land to him years ago. Now he would buy a small burial plot. God had promised Abraham many things, the most remarkable of which was a son in his old age.

However, God also promised him a land for his people forever. Yet Abraham did not own so much as an acre. He was living in tents and moving from place to place. He was contented to be a pilgrim while he lived but secured a place where, when he died, his flesh would rest in hope.

Abraham serves as an example to Christians today who also have been given promises that we must wait to inherit. Most of the things that God has promised His people will not be received in this life. We must have faith for the future and confidence in God that goes beyond this life. We need to remember Abraham's example and keep our faith by remembering that God's promises are primarily future realities.

While our inheritance is in heaven, we have obligations in this present world. We must submit to earthly authorities. We must also obey the laws of the land and pay our taxes. Our heavenly mind is what makes us useful in the present. Abraham lived in the present in the light of the future. His future inheritance did not lessen his present obligations; it established his priorities.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 11
PSALMS 52–54

THOUGHT

Christians have often been accused of being so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:1–9***LESSON****Searching for a wife****VERSE 7**

*The LORD God of heaven,
which took me from my
father's house, and from the
land of my kindred, and
which spake unto me, and
that sware unto me, saying,
Unto thy seed will I give
this land; he shall send his
angel before thee, and thou
shalt take a wife unto my
son from thence.*

Abraham sent his servant to seek a wife for his son, fully assured that God had prepared the way and would make that way clear. Isaac must have a wife, for God had promised descendants.

She must not come from Canaan, lest she drew him away from the God of promise and expose him to the coming judgement. And he must not return to Mesopotamia, for God had promised the land of Canaan as his everlasting possession. The word of promise that God had spoken to Abraham in the past gave rise to his decision. By looking back at God's word, Abraham discerned the will of God and thus acted accordingly.

There are two lessons to learn from this. One is that we discover God's will for our lives from His Word. The other is that God works powerfully for those who do His will. If you are not spending time in the meditative study of God's Word, then doing God's will on earth is not the passion of your life. Do you think you can maintain a powerful, renewed mind with a ten-minute glance at God's Word once a day? If you want to bring forth the will of God in your life, you must build your foundation on His Word.

Is there any area of compromise that is nagging you, slowing you down, and dragging you into paganism one day at a time? Don't go back to that from which you were saved. Don't compromise with the world. Stay in God's Word and put into action what He says.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 12
PSALM 55

THOUGHT

God will guide you when you walk with Him and are committed to His purpose.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:10–15***LESSON****A servant's prayer****VERSE 12**

And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.

To know God's guidance, we must apply God's wisdom. Some think that Abraham's servant was putting out a fleece when he laid out the terms of how he would know which young woman was right for Isaac. But there was a big difference between what he did and what Gideon did in putting out his fleece. The servant was neither dictating to God nor doubting what God had already made clear. He was trying to provide a basis upon which he could know that his prayer had been answered.

The test he proposed shows that he was applying God's wisdom to his situation. In reality, the servant sought to test the woman rather than God. This unusual request gives us a deep insight into human nature as well as dependence on divine guidance. His petition was not to be denied. Indeed, it was answered even before the request was completed.

Seeking God's will is not a matter of formula. It is a matter of walking in constant fellowship with the Lord, taking everything to Him in prayer. When you know that prayer is behind your circumstances, then that which otherwise may seem to be a coincidence turns out not to be one after all. Your steps are ordered by the Lord.

When you walk with Him and are committed to His purpose, He will work quietly behind the scenes of your life, leading you through potential hazards. The process becomes a blending of God's faithfulness and sovereignty with our obedience and trust in Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 13
PSALMS 56–57

THOUGHT

We are backward to pray, God is forward to hear prayer.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:16–25***LESSON****Rebekah****VERSE 21**

*And the man wondering
at her held his peace, to
wit whether the LORD
had made his journey
prosperous or not.*

It had been a normal day. Rebekah went about her chores, totally unaware that God had intended for her life to change that day. In this story, Rebekah was rewarded because she gave more than was needed. The only thing that Abraham's servant asked for was a drink of water. Rebekah went beyond what was asked. She watered his camels as well. The servant was stunned. He stood back and watched her, and he wondered if the Lord had made his journey successful.

Our character is shown through our behaviour, especially in our response to things that do not seem to matter. Rebekah did not know that she was being watched; she just served because it was her nature. But God blessed her in ways far beyond her imagination.

Where does beauty come from? It comes from character. Beauty should not come from outward adornment. Instead, it should be that of the inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. A godly character will always shine through.

Like Rebekah, we have opportunities every day to make choices and turn the story of our life in a new way. Use it well. Recognise that your ability to make a choice lives under the umbrella of God's choice for you. God has chosen to be our God, and God promises to watch over us always. He is all-seeing and knows all our intentions.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 14
PSALMS 58–59

THOUGHT**What are you like when no one is watching?**

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:26–27***LESSON****The Lord led me****VERSE 27**

*And he said, Blessed be the
LORD God of my master
Abraham, who hath not left
destitute my master of his
mercy and his truth: I being
in the way, the LORD led me
to the house of my master's
brethren.*

It is remarkable to know that you are doing what God wants you to do. When the servant set out on the road, he had prayed that God would lead him. He had made up his mind and was ready to accept whomsoever God had designated.

Did the servant know what was going to happen when he left Abraham's house? Did he plan in advance to meet Rebekah at the well? Did he know he was going to ask for the sign of the watering of the camels? He knew none of these. In fact, he did not know for sure that he would find the right girl or that she would be willing to return with him even if he did find her. The only thing he knew was that God would guide his steps and he would be where God wanted him to be at the right moment.

If we expect guidance we must diligently act. The first condition of securing real guidance in our daily life is to ask and then look for it, and be willing to accept it.

God has a plan and purpose for the life of every one of us. It is our responsibility to seek God and discover what that plan is. There are times when we need to wait on the Lord to discover His purpose but once we know what it is, it is up to us to take action. When we are "in the way," that is, in the path of God's blessing, He will lead us from where we are to where He wants us to be.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 15
PSALMS 60–61**

THOUGHT

**The Lord is glorified in answering our prayer.
The Lord is also glorified when we respond to
Him in gratitude.**

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:28–33***LESSON****Laban****VERSE 29**

*And Rebekah had a brother,
and his name was Laban:
and Laban ran out unto the
man, unto the well.*

Now comes Rebekah's brother, Laban, not walking but running to meet the mystery guest. He heard of the servant's presence, saw the jewellery given to Rebekah and eagerly invited Abraham's servant into their home. He informed the servant that he had already prepared the house for him to stay, having no idea that the servant needed or even wanted a place to stay.

Laban's over-zealous hospitality—coming immediately after he took inventory of the gifts given to his sister—is commonly regarded as proof of the same covetousness that is his most obvious character trait throughout his life. We know Laban's character by his conduct later. He would not bother to entertain the servant if he had not hoped to be well rewarded for it. He would not have been so insistent in his invitation if he had not cherished a hope of more benefit.

Covetousness makes a man calculative while appearing to be generous, even to the point of dishonesty. It makes a man short-sighted. It causes him to be obsessed with his own interests. Covetousness is an ever-indifferent attitude towards the rightful claim of others. Sooner or later, covetousness is sure to be rebuked.

We must be cautious today of the greed and covetousness that caused Laban to behave unscrupulously, even towards his family. Greed and covetousness lead one to worship the idol of materialism. It can also cause one to be deceitful in one's dealings with others. We need to be content with the things we have. Learn from the lesson of Laban and do not follow in his greedy, deceitful way.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 16
PSALMS 62–63

THOUGHT

The personal sin of covetousness can have a direct influence on the welfare of others.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:34–47***LESSON****Errand explained****VERSE 40**

And he said unto me, The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house.

Abraham's servant met Rebekah and her family and identified himself as a servant of Abraham, Bethuel's uncle [v. 34]. He gave a testimony concerning Abraham and Isaac. Since he was making a marriage proposal, he gave an account of Abraham's wealth and position. He stated that through the blessing of God, his master was rich and that the bride would have a suitable home and a congenial society. He also mentioned Isaac's miraculous birth and position as heir to the wealth of his father.

He next recounted the oath that he had given to Abraham. Isaac must remain in Canaan. He must not marry a Canaanite woman. Instead, he should fetch a bride from among his kindred in Haran. He gave details of how the Lord had led him to Rebekah. He made an earnest, definite prayer and God answered him.

By the providence of God, Rebekah came to fetch some water at the well. She not only gave the servant some water to drink but also offered her services to provide water for his camels. She had all the qualities he was looking for. She had proved to be the kind of godly wife Abraham was seeking for his son.

After he had given the testimony clearly and persuasively, he mentioned the marriage proposal for their consideration and waited for their decision. The key verse for today shows Abraham's trust in God's provision. How about you? Are you willing to emulate Abraham's obedience to leave our needs to God?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 17
PSALMS 64–65

THOUGHT

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. – John 1:12

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:48–49***LESSON****A servant's prayer****VERSE 48**

And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

Having fulfilled his mission, Abraham's servant bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord. His words of prayer are the spontaneous expression of a simple but sublime trust in the guiding providence of the Almighty God. He had immediately acknowledged God's goodness to him, leading him, as he expressed it, "in the right way". He received God's blessing and guidance because he had walked by faith. Those who walk as God directs are sure to receive His abundant blessing.

Abraham's servant was entrusted with a mission to find a bride for Isaac [v. 7]. His prayerful attitude was answered with success. When he set out, he had no idea how it would end. Probably his mind was filled with doubts and fears. But he plodded on, for he had given his oath to his master Abraham. As he walked the path of duty, he received God's blessing.

Christ leads us as we walk in the right way. Those who follow His footsteps will never be lost. To walk in His way is to walk through life in His spirit and by His power. It is the way of love and purity, sincerity and honour, humility and truth. Those who walk in it are sure of the crowning blessing of God.

We are told of his attitude of humility and worship [v. 26–27, 48, 52]. Serving the Lord with a worshipful, loving attitude of heart is the only kind of service that is truly blessed by God. Worship includes not only praise and thanksgiving but also service to God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 18
PSALMS 66–67

PRAYER

Lord, may we have Thy cause and worship as a very part of ourselves.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:50–54***LESSON****A servant's responsibility****VERSE 51**

Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.

Abraham's servant was given the responsibility to find a bride for Isaac. Isaac selected "the oldest servant of his house who ruled over all that he had" [v. 2]. He instructed him carefully and made his expectations clear [v. 3–4]. He trusted God to work in and through the man he had chosen [v. 7].

The servant felt he had to perform a duty to God as well as to man, for Abraham was in covenant with God and he had taken a solemn oath to be faithful to his master in this matter. He came from a family where the fear of the worship of Jehovah was made known. We are not told explicitly on how much the servant knew about God but his actions spoke loudly. Through his actions, we see that he believed in God and for him, God was everywhere and knew everything.

Abraham's servant faithfully carried out his mission. He prayed and trusted God, always sensitive to God's leading. He praised God even before his assignment was completed [v. 27, 48–49]. His covenant loyalty was his predominant motivation [v. 9, 12, 27, 49].

The servant travelled from Canaan to Haran and concluded a marriage for his master's son. He gave valuable presents to the bride and her relatives and brought her back. Isaac and Rebekah met as man and wife without seeing each other before. The servant successfully carried out his responsibility that the Lord, through his master, had entrusted to him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 19
PSALM 68

THOUGHT

Those who do the will of God prayerfully and obediently are led by God. Read Proverbs 3:5–6.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:55–60***LESSON****Hinder me not****VERSE 56**

*And he said unto them,
Hinder me not, seeing the
LORD hath prospered my
way; send me away that I
may go to my master.*

The next morning, Abraham's servant surprised everyone by requesting an immediate departure from Haran. Rebekah's mother and brother willingly agreed to let her go but asked for a respite of 10 days to make adequate farewell preparations. The servant's response was frank and direct: "Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master" [v. 56].

Rebekah made up her mind instantly and declared her willingness to go immediately with the servant. Her obedience revealed the nature of her trust in the God of Abraham. They sent her away with a blessing, "be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them" [v. 60b]. The blessing by her family was similar to that given to Abraham by the Lord [Genesis 22:17].

Abraham's servant urged for haste, knowing that his master was anxiously waiting for the good news of his success. Isaac was also waiting for his bride to be brought to him. She must not be making merry while he was interceding, praying and meditating.

Believers are not to linger and wait for the earthly things of life. We must come out and be separated. We must turn like the prodigal son, arise and go. We must turn back from the things of this life. Christ is interceding for His Church and His bride. The angels in heaven are waiting to rejoice over a returning, repentant sinner.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 20
PSALM 69

PRAYER

Dear Lord, may we be willing to be guided by the Holy Spirit.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:61–66***LESSON****Rebekah's departure****VERSE 61**

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

Rebekah left Haran by faith, like Abraham leaving Ur. She obeyed what she believed to be the voice of God, left her homeland and relatives for the land of Canaan. Along with her nurse and attendants, she followed the guidance of Abraham's servant, who was charged with carrying out the divine purpose.

The journey was tiresome and tedious. They made their way through the land of the Canaanites and down into Negev, where Isaac lived. The Holy Spirit is with us to lead us and we must submit to His guidance. No matter how difficult our journey here on earth is, let us persevere on in God's strength.

Isaac was at Beersheba, meditating in the field at eventide. He was a deeply spiritual man who prayed habitually. As he arose from prayer and looked up, he saw the caravan approaching. Rebekah saw a man walking towards them. Having learnt that it was Isaac, she came down from the camel and immediately veiled herself. In other words, she bowed in unconditional surrender to the lordship of her husband.

It is faith meeting faith—faith venturesome and bold, meeting faith meditative and meek. Isaac listened patiently as the servant recounted the result of his mission. As Isaac was introduced to Rebekah by his faithful servant, so was Jesus introduced to the Church by the herald, John the Baptist. Likewise, all believers, the bride of Christ, must be ready to await our Bridegroom. Are you ready to depart from this world and be with our Lord Jesus when He comes for you?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 21
PSALMS 70-71

PRAYER

Lord, may every step we take bring us closer to our Lord Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 24:67***LESSON****Isaac loved his wife****VERSE 67**

And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

On the evening before the day of his marriage, Isaac was meditating and praying in the field at Beersheba. His heart was drawn towards Rebekah when she was within sight. His bride came to him across the wilderness, wooed and won for him by his faithful servant. With these two like-minded hearts, it was another case of love at first sight. Rebekah and Isaac were of one blood, as are Christ and His own.

When God leads in a marriage, true love—both physical and spiritual—is assured. Isaac had loved his mother dearly and missed her greatly, but now with Rebekah he was comforted. Now he had a wife to love him, to comfort him and bear his children. He was the only patriarch who had only one wife. This was God's ideal plan for mankind [Genesis 2:24].

The union of Isaac and Rebekah was a divinely ordered union. His love for his wife was both sacrificial and selfless, as the Apostle Paul wrote: "... even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" [Ephesians 5:25b]. It is a love that gives all, even one's own life.

The Christian husband is commanded by God to love his wife. He must love her in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer until death parts them. This is possible because the Holy Spirit lives in every born-again believer. Every Christian must pray and ask God to help him love his wife daily with God's love. Christ's love for the Church is his example.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 22
PSALM 72

REMINDER

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. – Ephesians 5:25

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 25:1–6***LESSON****Abraham's descendants****VERSE 5***And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac.*

The story in Genesis 25 resumes about three years after Sarah's death. Following the death of Sarah, Abraham focused his attention on finding Isaac a wife. The search brought Rebekah into the family. She was the grandniece of Abraham. Isaac married Rebekah when he was 40 [v. 20], three years after his mother's death.

After Isaac's marriage, Abraham married Keturah [v. 1]. Not much is known about Keturah. Some said that she was a princess but more likely she was one of Abraham's handmaids. With Keturah, Abraham had six more children [v. 2; 1 Chronicles 1:32].

Abraham, however, did not forget Isaac. He gave all that he had to Isaac [v. 5; 24:36]. While Abraham also gave gifts to the sons of his concubines [v. 6], these gifts were not the promises of blessing or land. Isaac was God's choice. Isaac was the promised son that God said would come from Abraham's own bowels [Genesis 15:4]. It was with Isaac that God would establish his covenant [Genesis 17:19], and it was Isaac whom God blessed after Abraham's death [v. 11].

Like Isaac, Christians, as God's redeemed people, are also His choice. God has chosen us in Christ "before the foundation of the world" [Ephesians 1:4–7]. Like Isaac, we need to see ourselves as God's chosen means of accomplishing His divine will, and we do this by recognizing that "we are [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" [Ephesians 2:10].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 23
PSALM 73

THOUGHT

God has given us His Son. In so doing, He has given us His best, and He has given us His all. Praise God for our Lord Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 25:7–11

LESSON
Abraham's death

VERSE 8

Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.

Abraham died at the age of 175 years. He was 75 when he was called by God to leave Ur of the Chaldees [Genesis 12]. For one hundred years, Abraham walked with God.

Adam Clarke wrote this eulogy of Abraham: “His obedience to the call of God, and faith in his promises, stand super-eminent. No wonders, signs, or miraculous displays of the great and terrible God ... were necessary to cause Abraham to believe and obey. He left his own land, not knowing where he was going, or for what purpose God had called him to remove ... The authority of God was always sufficient for Abraham ... it was his duty to obey; the success and the event he left with God ... As soon as he hears the voice of God, he girds himself to his work! As a son, as a husband, as a father, as a neighbour, as a sovereign, and above all as a man of God, he stands unrivalled ... he is proposed and recommended as the model and pattern according to which the faith, obedience, and perseverance of the followers of the Messiah are to be formed.”

Death for the Christian is a joyful reunion with God's people. Abraham's death, however, did not mark the end. Abraham passed on to his son a spiritual heritage of God's blessing, which, by faith, to all of us through Jesus Christ. Abraham did not just “pass on”; he passed on the blessings of God down through the centuries.

Christians need to live with future generations in mind. It is more important to leave behind a legacy of faith for our sons and daughters.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 24
PSALM 74

THOUGHT

Live so that your descendants will rise up and call you blessed.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 25:12–18***LESSON****Ishmael's descendants****VERSE 17**

And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people.

The Genesis story makes a little detour to record the death and descendants of Ishmael. Moses added this account to show that God “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” [Ephesians 1:11].

God had promised that He would bless Ishmael and he would be the father of 12 princes [Genesis 17:20]. God kept that promise [v. 13–16]. In the matter of spiritual blessing, God had chosen Isaac to be the one with whom He would establish the everlasting covenant.

Abraham's death also brought Isaac and Ishmael together. They buried their father in Machpelah [v. 9]. After that, nothing more is said in the Bible concerning their personal relationship. They might have the same father but there are many differences between the two. Ishmael was the child of Abraham's slave, the son of expediency, and Isaac, the son of his wife, the son of promise. In life, Ishmael was a wild man [Genesis 16:12]; Isaac was contemplative and submissive. In death, the difference between the two brothers is seen in their burial. Ishmael and his son dwelt in the regions from Assyria to the border of Egypt [v. 18]. Isaac would be buried in the same place as his parents [Genesis 23:17; 25:9–10; 35:27].

The promise belonged to Isaac not because of Isaac's doing but God had made him so. Abraham and Isaac had nothing but what they had received from the hand of God. So it is with every believer. All that we have come from the mercy of God. On our part, we have to live and die in obedience to God's command.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 25
PSALMS 75–76

THOUGHT

Abraham died and was gathered unto his people [v. 8]. So was Ishmael [v. 17]. In other words, they each returned to their own. Who are your people of your gathering?

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 25:19–21***LESSON****Isaac's prayer****VERSE 21**

And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Isaac married Rebekah when he was 40 years old. Rebekah was probably a teenager. Rebekah was introduced as “the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian” [v. 20]. Both her father and brother were Syrians, originally from the Chaldees.

Rebekah was “barren” [v. 21]. From the text, it seems that Isaac was impatient. In reality, it was not so. The twins were born when Isaac was 60 years old [v. 26]. The couple had been married for 20 years before Isaac began to pray to God concerning his wife’s infertility. Infertility is the result of sin. After the fall of man, God cursed the ground, the yield of the ground [Genesis 3:17–18]. Human infertility was also deemed as a curse from God. In the Bible, the fruitful land and fertile women are images of God’s blessing. And the desolate land and barren women are images of the consequences of sin and God’s curse [read Deuteronomy 28:1–4; 15–18].

Isaac prayed for Rebekah and God answered his prayer. In this, Isaac did better than his father Abraham. Abraham and Sarah did not think to pray for the son that God had promised but Sarah devised her own plan to have the son through Hagar. Isaac, on the other hand, simply “intreated the LORD for his wife ... and Rebekah his wife conceived” [v. 21]. What amazing grace!

Prayer is not a clutch for our hopelessness. It is God’s means to express our hopefulness in the sovereign Lord. It is the Lord Who gives meaning and fulfilment not just by blessings but more by His own presence in our lives [Psalm 16:11].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 26
PSALM 77

THOUGHT

God has given you His own Son; He will not withhold any good thing from you. Wait on the Lord!

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 25:22–23***LESSON****Two nations****VERSE 23**

And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

After 20 years of marriage, Rebekah finally conceived. But she experienced much distress in her pregnancy, as “the children struggled together within her” [v. 22]. The word ‘struggled’ is also translated ‘oppressed’ [Judges 10:8]. It paints the picture of a warfare in the womb. Rebekah could not understand the reason for this struggle. Like her husband, she turned to God and inquired of the Lord [v. 22].

God’s answer was not what Rebekah had expected. God told her that her trouble was but a picture of greater things to come. First, Rebekah was told that she would have two sons. Second, the two sons would represent two nations that would be opposed to each other from the very beginning. Third, the elder was to serve the younger. Rebekah found that she was the means by which God would carry out His divine purpose.

You may have experienced that God’s answers to your prayers are sometimes not quite what you expect. Like Rebekah, we may have experiences of struggle in our hearts and we are just as perplexed and distressed as she was.

Yet, when the answers came, we find that what we thought was God’s discipline was really His pathway of duty for us. The road of duty that God leads is often fraught with troubles and trials. These are not meant to discourage us but serve the purpose of making us into what God has intended for us to be.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 27
PSALM 78

THOUGHT

In seeking God’s will for our lives, we have to remember that God is not so much interested in what we can do for Him as He is in what we will become.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 25:24–27***LESSON****Two sons****VERSE 24**

*And when her days to be
delivered were fulfilled,
behold, there were twins in
her womb.*

From barrenness to double joy! Just as God told Rebekah, she gave birth to two sons. The elder was Esau and the younger was Jacob. From the moment of birth, the two sons were different in appearance as well as in disposition. Esau was hairy and an outdoor man, “a cunning hunter, a man of the field” [v. 27]. Jacob was just the opposite. He was “a plain man, dwelling in tents” [v. 27].

The physical differences were a sign of the hostility between the two brothers. They would grow up to have very different pursuits. The differences between Esau and Jacob were not helped by the parents’ favouritism. Isaac loved Esau for the game that he offered. Rebekah, on the other hand, loved Jacob for the company that he gave.

The differences between the twin brothers would carry over into the history of their descendants. Just as the two brothers jostled in the womb, so their descendants would fight over the land. But God chose the younger over the elder [v. 23]. God chose Jacob to be the inheritor of the promises of Abraham and Isaac. This was God’s sovereign right and not because of any intrinsic worth on the part of Jacob. Paul used this to demonstrate the sovereign goodness of God in saving sinners [Romans 9:13–16].

Was Esau foolish? Yes, and so is the man who rejects God [Psalm 14:1]. Was God unrighteous for not giving Jacob his just deserts for stealing his elder brother’s blessing? God forbid! The application of grace is that we do not get what we deserve.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 28
PSALM 79

THOUGHT

Was the transaction of salvation a reasonable bargain? No, the very essence of grace is found in God’s sovereign love.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 25:28***LESSON****Family feud****VERSE 28**

*And Isaac loved Esau,
because he did eat of his
venison: but Rebekah loved
Jacob.*

Isaac favoured Esau. He was the first-born and this conviction of his pre-eminence in birth may have weighed on Isaac more than all other claims. In addition, Esau was a strong, bold man who was physically and mentally fitted to promote the promised prosperity and victories for the family of Abraham. Although Isaac knew that God had revealed to Rebekah that Jacob was to inherit the lineage, he might have doubted its reality or explained it away according to his own temper or wish. We all know how our desires and feelings affect our beliefs.

Isaac also favoured Esau “because he did eat of his venison.” Esau was like his father in that they had a fondness in the pleasure of the feast. Although this may have been only one reason among others, it does point to the fact that Isaac’s preference was founded on nature, not on grace.

Rebekah favoured Jacob. This was only natural, for Jacob was the son who was responsible. He looked after and worked for the welfare of the family. He served the Lord faithfully. Rebekah also believed that Jacob was the son appointed by God to receive the inheritance promised to Abraham. Both Isaac and Rebekah showed favouritism for the boys. It was the source of much trouble that arose later and kindled the flames of jealousy and resentment between members of the family.

Parents must guard against showing favouritism and partiality among their children. Children of one family should be regarded with equal love.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 29

PSALM 80

THOUGHT

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. – Ephesians 6:4

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 25:29–34***LESSON****Esau's sale****VERSE 31***And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.*

This is a story that shows just how far a person can go in parting with eternal treasures for the sake of fleeting pleasures of this present world.

One day when Esau was returning from a hunting trip, exhausted and hungry, he saw Jacob cooking a stew. He headed for Jacob and demanded for some of the pottage. Gripped with an uncontrollable hunger, he wanted the stew there and then.

Jacob demanded Esau to sell his birthright to him in exchange for the stew. Esau would have indignantly rebuked Jacob for making such an irreverent proposal. However, the present satisfaction of the appetite overwhelmed all higher considerations and overcame the nobility in him. Instead of resisting the tempter, he spoke contemptuously of his birthright. He preferred the present to the future. The mess of pottage was there before him, all ready for his enjoyment. The high privileges of his birthright were far away in the future. He preferred the near and certain to the distant and probable. The promised advantages of the birthright were in the probable future. He might not live to enjoy them. "Behold," he said, "I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" [v. 32]

Are you despising your birthright, choosing instead the savoury but passing pottage of this world? If you have not committed yourself fully to Christ and are not going on with Him with all the strength at your disposal, that is precisely what you are doing. You are an Esau.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 30
PSALM 81

THOUGHT

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. – 1 John 2:16

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 26:1–5***LESSON****God's covenant with Isaac****VERSE 3**

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

A famine arose in the land and it was a different famine from the one Abraham had faced. The famine was so severe that Isaac stood on the brink of losing his wealth.

He weakened under the trial of losing all he had and the temptation to stop believing God and forsake the Promised Land. He moved his herds and flocks southward towards Egypt, where there was rich fertile land and on the way stopped in Gerar, the capital of the Philistines.

But God appeared to Isaac and instructed him not to go down to Egypt but to live in Canaan, the land of promise. God promised that He would be with Isaac and bless him with a blessing similar to that which He had given to Abraham [v. 3–4]. God promised to bless Isaac because Abraham, his father, had followed His will [v. 5]. In a similar way we are blessed because of Jesus' obedience, not our own.

Keep in mind that this is the Promised Land, the place of blessing in which this hardship takes place. From this account, we learn that we can be right where God wants us to be and still experience trouble sometimes. Being God's people does not exempt us from the problems that the rest of the world faces. Christians often grow discouraged when we encounter serious problems, not because the problems themselves are overwhelming but because we expect a trouble-less life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

NUMBERS 31
PSALM 82

THOUGHT

Remember that God can bless us despite our situation and He can bless His people despite their sins.

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 26:6–11

LESSON
Isaac's deception

VERSE 7

And the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon.

Isaac obeyed God but only partially. He still did not trust God completely. Though he did not go down into Egypt, neither did he return to Canaan. He stayed in Gerar, which was on the border of Canaan, right at the entrance to Egypt. Gerar was probably a commercial town trading with Egypt, and so Isaac's wants during the famine could be met here.

Many of us are like Isaac. We follow the Lord halfheartedly when trials confront us. We keep one foot in heaven, trying to follow God, while keeping the other foot in the world, relying on the world to help us.

The men of Gerar were struck with the appearance of Rebekah. Isaac, in answer to their inquiries, lied that she was his sister, fearing that his life would be in peril if her true identity was made known. Isaac told a blatant lie out of sheer selfishness. He did not consider the danger and abuse that Rebekah might be subjected to.

The sin of Isaac was eventually discovered by Abimelech. The king rebuked Isaac for endangering him and his people. He feared the punishment of Isaac's God should anyone have taken Rebekah and committed adultery with her. Abimelech made a public proclamation throughout the whole country that no one was to hurt Isaac or Rebekah [v. 11]. Note Abimelech's fear of God against sin, a fear missing in the hearts of so many. Imagine the shame for both Isaac and Rebekah and the ruin of their testimony before the world.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 32
PSALMS 83–84

THOUGHT

The deliverance of Isaac from his lie shows that God does protect His saints from the evil that they bring upon themselves.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 26:12–17***LESSON****Isaac's blessing****VERSE 12**

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him.

Although Isaac was only half-heartedly following the Lord by remaining among the worldly Philistines, God kept His promise to Abraham by blessing Isaac. His crops produced a hundredfold, his personal wealth became great, his flocks and herds and servants increased greatly, so much so that the Philistines envied him [v. 12–14].

The Philistines' envy turned to spite and they crippled Isaac's ranching and farming operations by filling his wells with dirt, thus hurting the water supply. Rift in the once peaceful relationship between Isaac and the Philistines surfaced.

Every blessing of the world is accompanied by some evil. Great possessions are a blessing but they often rob us of our quiet and repose, and they bring us new anxieties. High status in society is a blessing but it often renders a man the object of jealousy. We have to pay a price for earthly good.

Eventually, even King Abimelech saw Isaac as a threat to his kingdom and asked Isaac to leave the country before a struggle broke out between him and the Philistines. Isaac's response was one of respect [v. 17]. However, he did not return to the heart of the Promised Land but simply moved further up and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar. He was planning to stay and live in the valley of Gerar. Isaac was still lacking in the complete trust in God and His provision. His proximity to the city where he had left would inevitably bring spiritual disaster.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 33–34
PSALM 85

THOUGHT

When we are out of the Lord's will, the only way to get back is to return all the way. To stay on the fringe is to remain outside.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 26:18–22***LESSON****Isaac's well****VERSE 22**

And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

Isaac had still not returned to the heart of the Promised Land. As a result, the trouble facing him was to increase. God was going to use the trouble and trials of life to force Isaac to return to the Promised Land.

Isaac reopened the wells that his father had dug and laid claim to them. He gave the wells the very same names his father had given to establish his rightful ownership. His workers also dug new wells but strife erupted over two of the wells. The herdsmen from Gerar laid claims to these wells. Isaac could either fight for his rights or move on.

Isaac met the envy and strife with patience. He refused to fight and he moved on instead. After he moved some distance, he dug another well and no one argued over this particular well. The strife ended unexpectedly. Endurance and meekness—the Gospel spirit—is the only true weapon against the world. To commemorate the occasion, Isaac named the well Rehoboth, which means ‘plenty of space’. God had made room and brought peace to Isaac.

God used the trouble of strife and hostility to drive Isaac back to Him. We need to know that God does chasten us. When we turn away from God, He always disciplines us. He allows trouble and trials to afflict us and stir us to repentance, to turn us away from the world and back to Him.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NUMBERS 35–36
PSALMS 86–87**

THOUGHT

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. – 2 Corinthians 4:17

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 26:23–25***LESSON****Isaac's altar****VERSE 25**

And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

God prospered Isaac in Gerar. His wealth resulted in the envy of the Philistines. Conflicts flared among the herdsmen. Isaac moved to Beersheba. The Lord appeared to him and said: "Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee." Isaac built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord.

Isaac first built an altar to worship God. Next he pitched a tent so his family had a home. Then he dug a well to nourish his people and flocks. The altar, the tent and the well—in that order.

How can we relate Isaac's sequence of actions to our lives today? We too have priorities. The altar represents our priority to God. The tent represents our priority to our family. The well represents our priority to our career. Sometimes we put our family first, that is, we pitch the tent first. Sometimes we put our career first, that is, we dig the well first. We need money to put food on the table. We work hard so we can afford a comfortable life. When we put our family and career first, we may have achieved our material gains at a cost to our spiritual life—we can only give our leftover time and energy to build an altar. Our relationship with God may deteriorate.

If we follow the example of Isaac and put God first in our lives, we will receive His blessings. An altar is a spiritual platform where we can experience God. The rest will come soon after.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY I
PSALM 88

THOUGHT

Let us put God first in whatever we do, always presenting our firstfruits to Him.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 26:26–31***LESSON****Isaac's covenant with Abimelech****VERSE 31**

And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

King Abimelech was afraid when Isaac grew in wealth and power. He feared that hostility and conflict might eventually flare up. Acting in the same manner as he did towards Abraham, he went to Beersheba and signed a treaty of mutual non-aggression with Isaac.

When Isaac was in Gerar, the response of the people of the land was one of envy and animosity. They asked Isaac to leave their land. Yet now they came all the way to make peace with him. What brought about this change of heart and mind? King Abimelech realised that the hand of God was upon Isaac and that a peaceful relationship with him was highly desirable.

Isaac could have responded harshly towards the Philistines. He needed no guarantee of peace from them as the Lord was with him. But he was a peace-loving man. He forgave their offence, accepted their proposal and treated them to a feast. It is perhaps natural for us to be on guard when we deal with people who have treated us unfairly. But Isaac did not dwell on past grudges; he willingly entered into friendship with them.

Our Lord teaches us to live peaceably with others. If we continually bring up the offences of those we claim we have forgiven, we are not making peace. Let us be reconciled with people with whom we are not getting along with. We who have enjoyed God's blessings have enough reason to forgive and accept those who have been unkind to us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 2
PSALM 89

THOUGHT

When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. – Proverbs 16:7.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 26:32–35***LESSON****We found water****VERSE 32**

And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came, and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water.

After King Abimelech left Isaac following a pact of non-aggression, Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found a well of springing water. What a mercy it was to have plenty of water, and to have it without striving for it! Isaac named the well 'Shebah' (oath). The Hebrew word 'Beer' means 'a well'. Beer-Sheba thus means 'the well of the oath'. It is the place where Isaac entered into a covenant relationship with God and found living water.

Till then, Isaac had dug three wells in the land of the Philistines and had met much opposition. He named the wells 'Esek' (strife), 'Sitnah' (hatred) and 'Rehoboth' (open space). Despite the obstacles, he persevered. It should be the same with us.

At times when we are not getting any breakthrough, it may be time for us to make some adjustments in order to find springing water. It may not be a physical move like Isaac; it may simply be a change in our thinking or attitude.

From Isaac we also learn that once we make up our minds not to give up, there will come a time when God steps in and gives us rest from our enemies. Isaac kept moving away from people who made life difficult for him—with no fight and no fuss. He did not grumble although it was his servants who had worked hard in digging the wells but it was the Philistines who got to enjoy the fruits. Isaac made adjustments by changing his locations, and God gave him plenty of water in the end.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 3
PSALM 90

THOUGHT

In the Bible, water is often used to depict the Word of God. As water is necessary for our physical well-being, so the Word of God is necessary for our spiritual growth.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 27:1–4***LESSON****Isaac's preparation for death****VERSE 4**

*And make me savoury
meat, such as I love, and
bring it to me, that I may
eat; that my soul may bless
thee before I die.*

And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison" [Genesis 25:28]. Isaac's love for wild game made him favour Esau over Jacob as the former ministered unto his fleshly appetites. When he was old and thought his death imminent, instead of giving himself to prayer, he called for Esau and said: "... go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love...that my soul may bless thee before I die" [v. 3–4].

Note how many times Scripture mentioned Isaac in relation to 'venison' and 'savoury meat.' Isaac's appetite was the cause of his disobedience. He deliberately decided to give the patriarchal blessings to Esau though God had clearly revealed that "the elder shall serve the younger" [Genesis 25:23].

While it is true that the Lord blessed Isaac and he played an important role in the Messianic line, Isaac also had his weaknesses. He sent his son to get him a good meal before he died. His action led to much deception and an eventual split of the family.

How many times our lives are messed up because we make decisions based on our physical needs rather than the will of God! We can see in Isaac's decision that even in believers, the weakness of the flesh will often make us ignore God's guidance. We are prone to take action based on our own perspective and thereby often miss our way.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 4
PSALM 91

THOUGHT

Ponder on 1 John 2:16–17.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 27:5–17***LESSON****Deceptions of Isaac and Rebekah****VERSE 17**

And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

Rebekah loved Jacob while Isaac favoured Esau. The next episode of the tension and strife in Isaac's family was about to play out. Isaac and Esau were planning a birthright blessing celebration without consulting Rebekah and Jacob. Isaac had ordered Esau to prepare him a tasty meal of venison. There was to be a private birthright ceremony between them.

The bestowal should have been a family affair. But Isaac knew very well there would be contention over Esau's receiving of the patriarchal blessing. The family knew that in the Lord's oracle [Genesis 25:23], Jacob was chosen by God to receive the birthright.

Isaac was all set, or so he thought. However, "Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son". How sad that Rebekah must eavesdrop on Isaac to learn of the birthright blessing ceremony. We next see Rebekah and Jacob scheming to disrupt the bestowal without directly confronting Isaac and Esau. It seems that all lines of communication between the two parties in the family had been severed. Fleshly desires and deceptions had ruined the family.

There are no innocents in this episode. It goes to show that believers can and do act abominably at times. God demands our obedience to His methods and timing to accomplish His work. God ordains the means as well as the end. We do not have to give God a helping hand when things appear to go wrong. Good intentions do not justify our acting in the flesh.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 5
PSALMS 92–93

THOUGHT

In the process of accomplishing a goal, obedience to God is as important as the goal itself.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 27:18–22***LESSON****Deceptions of Jacob****VERSE 19**

And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

Jacob, supported by his mother Rebekah, was trying to ‘help’ God fulfil His will. They desired to obtain the firstborn’s blessing—double portion of the inheritance and priestly function of the family—even at the cost of the ties of blood that connected them with Isaac and Esau.

Thus disguised, Jacob entered his father’s room. Whereas earlier Jacob hesitated at Rebekah’s trick, here Jacob displayed an unusual boldness in carrying out the deceptive act. Isaac apparently suspected that something was amiss. He wanted to ascertain if the visitor was really Esau. He asked, “How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?” to which Jacob replied, “Because the Lord thy God brought it to me” [v. 20]. How could Jacob have the boldness to say such a thing? He attributed the aid in his deception to God.

It seems easy for us to accuse Jacob of his deceit, but are we any better? Do not be so quick to judge Jacob. This episode is an amazing allegory concerning believers’ inheritance. We are like Jacob. Just as Jacob went to Isaac in the name of the firstborn son Esau, so also come we to the Heavenly Father for our inheritance in the name of the firstborn son Christ Jesus. Like Jacob the second-born son who did not deserve the inheritance, so also are we in our sin who do not deserve the inheritance our Father has prepared for us.

Let us praise God for bestowing the birthright blessings upon us despite our deceitful hearts.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 6
PSALM 94

THOUGHT

God’s ultimate goal is still achieved regardless of our defiance and disobedience, but we can avoid the negative consequences if we follow His methods and timing.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 27:23–29***LESSON****Isaac's blessing upon
Jacob****VERSE 23***And he discerned him not,
because his hands were
hairy, as his brother Esau's
hands: so he blessed him.*

This chapter describes the lies and deception of Rebekah and her favourite son, Jacob. Wanting only the best for Jacob, Rebekah instigated him to obtain Isaac's blessing. Thus coerced and strongly influenced by his mother, Jacob did so accordingly. Though Isaac blessed the wrong son, what he had spoken could not be revoked.

This short passage reveals what is truly in a man's heart. Behaving deceitfully, Jacob lived up to the meaning of his name—a supplanter and a cheat. Do not be surprised that even a believer saved by grace is not exempted from sinful deeds at all. Let us heed the Apostle Paul's warning: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" [Galatians 5:16].

Partaking of the meal was a Jewish patriarchal blessing signifying the passing on of the leadership of a family. Of equal significance is the kiss bestowed by Isaac upon Jacob. It was a sign of affection and reverence. Furthermore, such a physical contact gave Isaac the opportunity to smell his son, Esau, for the familiar odour of the outdoor apparel.

May all parents be warned against the danger of showing favouritism in the family. Discord within the family resulted in Isaac favouring Esau and Rebekah favouring Jacob. No doubt Jacob was chosen to carry on the Abrahamic covenant but he did not trust in God's timing and providence. On the contrary, he sought Isaac's blessing through his own self-sufficiency and cunning manipulation. The sovereignty of God is at work despite human deceit.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 7
PSALMS 95–96

WARNING

**Oh! What a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive.**

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 27:30–33***LESSON****Isaac's fear****VERSE 33**

And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.

Imagine Isaac's surprise and disappointment when he discovered what Jacob had done. Yet for the Jews, what was spoken could not be revoked in any way [Isaiah 55:11]. In every human deceit, God is sovereign and His plan will certainly come to pass.

Isaac trembled at the craftiness of Jacob in obtaining the blessing. Indeed, "a man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps" [Proverbs 16:9]. The overruling providence of God is at work here. Despite Jacob's dishonest means in getting the paternal blessing, Isaac was guilty of his own personal preference. In so doing, Isaac was going against God's will. What had occurred only convinced Isaac that it was of the Lord.

Isaac also trembled at his disappointment over Esau losing his blessing. As his favourite elder son, it was very natural for Isaac to dote on him. Esau's grief and reaction was great.

Moreover, Isaac was also amazed at his own act of blessing Jacob instead of Esau. Isaac finally realised that this paternal benediction resulted from God's Spirit guiding his will, hence his pronouncement: "Yea, and he shall be blessed." Isaac's sin was in attempting to bypass God's will of the Abrahamic covenant through the line of Jacob. Are you in the centre of God's will? Beware of the consequence of doing things in your own strength for your own glory. Pray for divine guidance to know God's will and then live in obedience to it.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 8
PSALMS 97–98

PRAYER**Lord, help me to be in tune with Your will.**

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 27:34–40***LESSON****Only one blessing****VERSE 38**

And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

Here we read of Esau's determination to obtain the blessing. He refused to acknowledge God's will in choosing Jacob as the head of the chosen family. Esau was very persistent in pestering his father for another blessing. Hence, through God's Spirit, Isaac made a prophecy concerning Esau and his descendants who later became the nation of Edom.

To quote the Vulgate Latin version of Esau's reaction, "he roared like a lion" [v. 34b]. This loud, doleful and hideous cry showed the extent of Esau's disappointment and grief. However, he failed to change Isaac's mind because the blessing was irrevocable [Hebrews 12:17].

Esau's reaction is no different from ours. At one time or another, we have been guilty of blaming others for our own sinful deeds. Just like Esau blaming Jacob for having taken his birthright and blessing, we tend to point our fingers at others for our own misdeeds. There was no sign of godly sorrow or repentance in Esau's words and attitude. He blamed everything that had happened on Jacob.

What happened to Isaac's family was the result of tampering with God's will. This blame game started in the Garden of Eden where Adam blamed Eve, who then blamed the serpent. However, in spite of Jacob's deception, God's will remained unchanged [Numbers 23:19]. As God's children, we must live within the centre of His will. No one can expect God to bless when we are not living in obedience to His will for us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 9
PSALMS 99–101

THANKS

For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. – 2 Corinthians 1:20

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 27:41***LESSON****Esau's hatred****VERSE 41**

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.

The extent of Esau's disappointment over the lost blessing is clear. He planned to kill Jacob after the death of their father. This showed his respect for his father but no consideration whatsoever for his mother. We were told "Esau said in his heart", a reminder that man's wicked deeds originate from within his heart [Mark 7:21]. The Apostle John goes a step further by saying that hatred is akin to murder [1 John 3:15].

Esau's resentment was carnal, revealing his evil intent [Proverbs 23:7; Luke 6:45]. His hatred of Jacob was unjustified, because his father, Isaac, had blessed Jacob in accordance to God's will. "The happiness of saints is the envy of sinners. Whom heaven blesses, hell curses" (Matthew Henry). No one can disannul what God has divinely spoken.

Thus Esau went in the way of Cain, who slew his brother Abel. His hatred of Jacob, whom God loved, is similar to King Saul's jealousy of David, who was divinely favoured over him. Such personal hatred was perpetuated in posterity nationally, such as the conflict between Edom (Esau's descendants) and Israel (Jacob's descendants).

Do not underestimate the consequence of sibling rivalry. Many families have been divided because of conflict over favouritism and inheritance. It is a different issue altogether when we are angry for the cause of Christ. Our anger must not be directed against anyone out of any personal offence. Learn from this family conflict and avoid disputes among our own family members. As a self-check here, if you harbour any secret hatred against anyone, pray for God's grace to forgive that person.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 10
PSALM 102

MEDITATION

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. – Romans 12:21

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 27:42–46***LESSON****Weary of life****VERSE 46**

*And Rebekah said to Isaac,
I am weary of my life
because of the daughters of
Heth: if Jacob take a wife of
the daughters of Heth, such
as these which are of the
daughters of the land, what
good shall my life do me?*

Rebekah thought of a way to save Jacob from Esau: Hide him in the household of Laban, her brother. Yet she needed an excuse to do so without further antagonising Esau. She told Isaac that Jacob could not marry the daughters of the heathen and thus should be sent to his uncle for the arrangement of a proper marriage.

Rebekah used Esau's marriage to heathen women as an excuse to convince Isaac to send Jacob away. Her real motive was to protect Jacob from Esau's murderous intent. The half-truth uttered by Rebekah was out of love for her favourite son Jacob and concern for Isaac. Yet it is also true that, since Jacob was of the line of the Abrahamic covenant, he must not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever [2 Corinthians 6:14].

The disastrous consequence of unequally yoked relationships was obvious in Isaac's household. Having seen it at close range, Isaac realised the danger of unequally yoked marriages. There must have been frequent family squabbles and disagreements. Rebekah was so vexed by it ("I am weary of my life") that she truly did not want Jacob to marry a local heathen girl.

Again this incident clearly shows the divine providence of God at work. The messianic line was kept unbroken and the Abrahamic covenant was kept pure and unsullied. It is very comforting indeed to know that when we live in obedience to God's will, He will keep us from harm and danger.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 11–12
PSALM 103

PRAYER

Lord, help me to keep on trusting You for all my needs.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 28:1–5***LESSON****Jacob's blessing****VERSE 3**

*And God Almighty bless
thee, and make thee
fruitful, and multiply thee,
that thou mayest be a
multitude of people;*

We read of Isaac's parting words to his son, Jacob, with a specific charge. Isaac sent Jacob to Padan-aram to live with his uncle, Laban. This parting proved to be a sad farewell indeed, for Rebekah never saw her son again. "A few days" [Genesis 27:44] later turned out to be about 40 years, so probably Rebekah died before Jacob's return.

Not knowing the real reason, Isaac readily agreed with Rebekah's suggestion to send Jacob to Haran to look for a wife among his own descendants. Isaac could have been reminded of how his own father, Abraham, solicitously sought a wife for him when he was younger [Genesis 24:4].

It was timely at this point that Isaac blessed Jacob again before sending him away. It must have removed any remaining doubt on Jacob's part about his earlier blessing obtained through deceit. Moreover, being so close to the family, it was comforting for him to leave home with parental blessings. Jacob would have been very much encouraged, though life ahead from then onward as a fugitive could prove to be challenging.

Can you remember the very first time you left the comfort of your home? How did you feel? As God's children, we need not fear. As God has promised [Matthew 28:20b], He is always with us. Note that Isaac's blessing upon Jacob continued on to posterity. Indeed, how we conduct ourselves can affect our offspring. May we be fruitful in our service and labour of love for our Lord Jesus.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 13
PSALM 104

PRAYER**Thank You, Lord, for Your comforting presence.**

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 28:6–9***LESSON****Esau's disobedience****VERSE 9**

*Then went Esau unto
Ishmael, and took unto
the wives which he had
Mahalath the daughter of
Ishmael Abraham's son, the
sister of Nebajoth, to be his
wife.*

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 14
PSALM 105**

The reminder not to take heathen wives was passed from Abraham to Isaac and, by the turn of events, to Jacob. The messianic line was kept pure even as Jacob ran away from the threat of Esau. He was to later marry the daughters of Laban.

Yet on the other side, we see the line of disobedience. Because of Abraham's lack of faith, Ishmael came to this world. He was to become a great nation and rivalled God's people. Today we read of Esau's disobedience. Because of Esau's open defiance, the generations of the Edomites, as recorded for us later in Genesis 36, came to this world. Edom, too, was to also become one of Israel's closest enemies.

On both counts, we can see how human feelings and infirmities are related to sad consequences and even disastrous implications. In both, the protagonists allowed their emotions to reign. And in both, they failed badly. To Abraham, Hagar seemed the only way the family line could be preserved. Whereas for Esau, we could almost feel the hurt he felt when he realised he was robbed of his birthright blessings. Esau had chosen to marry heathen wives [v. 6–7], knowing that Jacob would be sent away precisely to prevent an unequally yoked marriage. This was not his first act of disobedience though. He had married Hittite girls [Genesis 26:34–35] and those acts "were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah".

Meditate upon these stories whenever you feel hopeless or angry. Seek counsel and assurance in the Word of God.

REMINDER

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. – Proverbs 12:15

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 28:10–15***LESSON****Jacob's dream****VERSE 15**

And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

To be sent away, albeit for loving reasons, can be a frightening thing, especially when one is fleeing for one's life. This was probably the reason why Isaac reassured Jacob before he left. In Genesis 28:3–4, we read of Isaac's reaffirmation of the blessing from God to Abraham, and passed on to him, and now Jacob.

Yet nothing can be compared with the assurance from God Himself, and He appeared to Jacob in a dream. Today's reading is better known as the episode of Jacob's Ladder, where Jacob saw angels ascending and descending between heaven and earth. It is an awe-inspiring sight. Our Lord Jesus would later use this imagery to tell us about much "greater things" about Himself that the Son of God is to reconcile man to God [John 1:51].

In the eyes of Jacob, he would not understand the typology involved. Yet we can see how the Abrahamic covenant is linked with the whole redemption story in the Bible. The Almighty Lord stood above all else and declared to Jacob that He is his God and the God of the generations before and after him [v. 13]. He is the One Who commands us to multiply and replenish the world [v. 14]. And He is the One Who will be with us wherever we go.

To Jacob, it was a timely assurance as he travelled through unknown lands to Padan-aram. To us, it is a constant comfort as we sojourn through this world to the New Jerusalem.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 15
PSALM 106

CONSIDERATION

For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken. – Proverbs 3:26

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 28:16–22***LESSON****Bethel****VERSE 22**

*And this stone, which I
have set for a pillar, shall be
God's house: and of all that
thou shalt give me I will
surely give the tenth unto
thee.*

Jacob was filled with much awe and fear after the dream. He woke up afraid, convinced that the very place he slept in was the gate of heaven, that it was “none other but the house of God” [v. 17]. He then proceeded with a ceremony to consecrate that place and named it Bethel, which means ‘house of God’.

We read next of Jacob’s vow to God. It sounds like a conditional statement: If God would be with him, and would keep him and provide for him both materially and spiritually, then he would give a tenth of what God had given him back to God. This interpretation is probably shaped by our understanding of Jacob as a man who wrestled and bargained with God.

However, there are two points we should take note here. Firstly, Jacob’s offering of a tenth was not a tithe. The command to tithe was only given together with the Law during Moses’ time. Instead, this was a voluntary offering by Jacob back to God. Secondly, there is a sense by which the vow of Jacob is not a conditional statement. Jacob’s wish to give back a tenth of what God had given him can be an offering out of pure thanksgiving. The Lord had promised to watch over him and sustain him, and being filled with gratitude to the faithful God Who would always live up to His promise, he has cheerfully offered a tenth of what he was given.

Our Lord has done so much for us. What have we done for Him?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 16
PSALM 107

REMINDER

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. – 2 Corinthians 9:7

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 29:1–12

LESSON
Meeting Rachel

VERSE 9

And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.

By the grace of God, Jacob finally reached the end of his journey. He came upon the well of Haran and asked if anyone knew Laban. It must have been a relief to know that Laban was still well and living.

Yet, we read of the strange behaviour of Jacob [v. 7]. He told these strangers that the day was still early and that they should water and feed their sheep. This tells us of Jacob's personality. We would see more of this trait in him when he wrestled with an angel and sought to reconcile with his brother Esau [Genesis 32]. He was a problem-solver. He did not shy away from difficulties and challenges, although he also possessed the patience of seeing a problem solved over an extended period of time (as in when it came to winning the hand of Rachel later).

The response of the people then was that they were waiting for all the flocks to be gathered and for the stone over the well to be moved away before they could water their sheep. At this crucial moment, Rachel came with Laban's sheep and Jacob took charge to remove the stone so that the sheep could be watered. He then told Rachel of their relation and she hurried home to inform Laban.

What we see here are two important elements when we face problems in life. On the one hand, if the Lord so wills, He will definitely provide the solution (Rachel coming at the opportune moment). On the other hand, we should also be pro-active in tackling challenges head-on.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 17–18
PSALMS 108–109

CONSIDERATION

The meaning of 'Jacob' is 'grabbing hold'. Are you grabbing hold and taking charge of your life as God so directs?

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 29:13–17***LESSON****Laban's daughters****VERSE 16**

And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

All seemed well for Jacob. He had left his home for the unknown. He was not sure what would come his way. He might not reach Padan-aram. Laban might not be around. Even if he was, he might not welcome him. Yet everything worked out well. God had gone before him and made his pathway straight.

Laban welcomed him with open arms, embracing and kissing him as he brought him into his house—Laban did not in the least bit suspect Jacob as an imposter [v. 14]. Not only that, he had work for him and was willing to pay him for his labour.

It is at this juncture that we learn of the two daughters of Laban: Leah, who was gentle, and Rachel, who was beautiful. Both were to become Jacob's wives and both were to become the mothers of great Israelite tribes. Jacob was to spend most of his life with Leah and favour the two sons of his favourite wife, Rachel.

Polygamy, though a common practice in the Old Testament, is in violation of God's Word. There is a further prohibition against a man marrying a woman and her sister [Leviticus 18:18]. From these actions, it is clear that Jacob had not sought direction from God with regard to this matter. Nevertheless, the promise which God had made to Jacob in Genesis 28:14 was about to come to pass. The seed of Jacob was to spread abroad like the dust of the earth, and in him and in his seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 19
PSALMS 110-111

REMINDER

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps. – Proverbs 16:9

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 29:18–20***LESSON****Jacob's love****VERSE 20**

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

Regardless of the correctness of Jacob marrying and favouring Rachel, his devotion for the woman he loved is still commendable. In today's verse, we read of how he agreed to serve Laban seven years for the hand of Rachel. This is but the first instalment of several seven years to come.

Yet Jacob was a man with a fixed intent. He was willing to labour for the person he loved and we read in verse 20 that when he did that, the seven years "seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her". Admirable as it might seem, Rachel did not stay with Jacob for long after their marriage; she was to die after the birth of their second son, Benjamin.

Yet there is one lesson we should learn from Jacob: to love the one and only true God Who first loved us, and who will always do.

We see this devotion in the heart of David: "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" [Psalm 27:4]. We see the same intent in the soul of the Apostle Paul too: "...but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" [Philippians 3:13b–14].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 20
PSALMS 112–113

CONSIDERATION**What is that 'one thing' in your life?**

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 29:21–30***LESSON****Laban's trick****VERSE 25**

*And it came to pass, that
in the morning, behold, it
was Leah: and he said to
Laban, What is this thou
hast done unto me? did not
I serve with thee for Rachel?
wherefore then hast thou
beguiled me?*

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 21
PSALMS 114–115**

At the end of seven years, Jacob went to Laban to claim the hand of Rachel, which was the wages for his labour for his uncle. However, Laban had planned to marry off his older daughter first. On the wedding night, he sent Leah to Jacob, and Jacob consummated his marriage with her instead of Rachel.

When Jacob confronted his uncle the next morning, Laban had already prepared his reply, which was to offer his younger daughter, Rachel, to Jacob in exchange for another seven years of service. Jacob was caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, he had already married Leah, but on the other hand, it was Rachel whom he loved.

Laban's trick is an example of the shrewdness of sinful men. In hindsight, we see that Laban was careful in his choice of words, and did not actually agree to Jacob's initial offer to serve him for Rachel's hand in marriage. He merely said that he would rather marry Rachel to Jacob than to another man. Some commentators argue that Laban had a valid reason to marry off his older daughter first, which was the custom of his time, and that Jacob should have been aware of this. However, by keeping silent and not clarifying the matter with Jacob, Laban showed that he had already planned to trick him.

As Christians, let our conversations be yea and nay only. We should not try to gain from trickery. Let us be unambiguous in our dealings, whether in business or other endeavours, so that we should be blameless before men, and a good testimony for Christ.

MEDITATION

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. – Matthew 5:37

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 29:31–35***LESSON****Leah's children****VERSE 31**

*And when the LORD saw
that Leah was hated, he
opened her womb: but
Rachel was barren.*

Leah was in an unenviable position, being the 'unwanted' wife of Jacob. Leah wanted so much to be loved by her husband, and this can be seen in the names that she gave her first four sons.

Giving birth to her first son, Reuben, must have been an affirming event for Leah, and she hoped that this would win Jacob's love. Naming her son Reuben, which means, 'behold a son', Leah was announcing to Jacob and everyone else that she had done her duty as his wife to give birth to his firstborn.

However, Leah was still unloved. She named her second son Simeon, which means 'heard', because she felt that the Lord had heard her plight, and had given her a second son. The third son was named Levi, which meant 'joined to', as she hoped that by the third birth, her husband's heart would be joined to hers. Finally, Leah gave birth to her fourth son, Judah, which meant 'praised'. Leah praised the Lord, perhaps because she had succeeded in winning Jacob's heart, or perhaps she saw that the Lord had been good to her and had blessed her richly with four sons, regardless whether Jacob loved her or Rachel more.

Leah's struggles may resonate with some of our own experiences. We may feel that we have had a tough life, and had to achieve a lot to win the attention or recognition of someone we love. But through it all, let us count our blessings and see beyond our personal desires. See the greater good that God is achieving through our hard work.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 22
PSALM 116

MEDITATION

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. – Romans 8:28

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 30:1–4***LESSON****Rachel's demand****VERSE 1**

*And when Rachel saw that
she bare Jacob no children,
Rachel envied her sister;
and said unto Jacob, Give
me children, or else I die.*

Rachel and Jacob had been in love since the first time they met. She was beautiful and favoured. Yet, in today's passage, we see the ugly side of her.

In her competition with her sister Leah, Rachel saw that she was fast losing to her sister in the childbearing department and, from implication, she felt that she was losing Jacob's heart to Leah as well. She thought that her status, as a woman and as a wife in her society at that time, would be complete if only she was able to bear a few children for Jacob.

In desperation, Rachel demanded children of Jacob, and this caused much friction in her relationship with her husband. There is much truth in Jacob's response to her demand: God had caused her to be barren. Here we see where the heart of the matter lies. Rachel's priorities were not right. She might have been selfish in that she wanted Jacob all to herself, and had neglected the fact that her sister was also married to him. Rachel's envy got the better of her, and she entered into a petty competition with her sister to produce children for Jacob. Jacob was also at fault for not stopping this kind of behaviour.

Marriage is not to be entered into lightly, and all couples should examine themselves before entering into this relationship. Procreation is only one aspect of marriage. Husband and wife should also uphold one another in mutual comfort and encouragement in all things, whether spiritually, physically or materially. All these can only come to pass with the blessings of God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 23
PSALMS 117–118

MEDITATION

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular
so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see
that she reverence her husband. – Ephesians 5:33

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 30:5–8***LESSON****Bilhah's humility****VERSE 5***And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.*

In her desperation, Rachel urged Jacob to take Bilhah as a substitute to bear her children. When Bilhah conceived and bare Jacob a son, Rachel named the son Dan, meaning 'judge' because God had judged Rachel and had heard her cry for a child. Then Bilhah bore Jacob another son and Rachel named him Naphtali, meaning 'wrestling', because of the struggles Rachel had with her sister Leah.

Notice that this was exactly what Sarah did when she wanted to help Abraham conceive a child. Sarah also gave her handmaid to Abraham so that she could conceive a child for him, with disastrous results. However, this is where the similarity ends. Jacob, unlike Abraham, already had four sons by Leah. Furthermore, there was no mention of any domestic problem between Bilhah and Rachel, unlike the problem between Sarah and Hagar.

When Hagar conceived a son for Abraham, she became proud and began to despise her mistress. Bilhah, on the other hand, was aware of the customs of that time that her children belonged to her mistress. She was mindful of her station as Rachel's handmaid and did not seek to usurp her place, even though she had given birth to two of Jacob's sons.

As Christians, we should always be humble and remember that we are saved by our Lord Jesus to serve Him. The fruits of our labours rightly belong to Him. We should not seek to glorify ourselves when the Lord blesses us. Instead, we should rejoice and glorify His name instead.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 24
PSALM 119:1–24

MEDITATION

I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. – Ecclesiastes 3:12–13

BIBLE LESSON
Genesis 30:9–13

LESSON
Leah's zeal

VERSE 9

When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.

Leah was not to be outdone by her sister. When she thought that she had stopped bearing children for Jacob, she also followed Rachel's example and gave Zilpah to Jacob to bear more children for her.

The result was that Zilpah bore Jacob two sons. Leah gleefully called Zilpah's first son Gad, meaning 'troop' because she expected many more children to come. She named the second son Asher, meaning 'happy', because she now has altogether six sons, while Rachel only had two, and they were not even her own. Leah must have felt happy to be so blessed with all her sons.

Today's passage showed the ugly side of Leah. She was not contented with bearing Jacob's first four sons and was anxious to make sure that her younger sister, Rachel, did not overtake her in childbearing. She resorted to enlisting Zilpah to bear her more children in her stead.

As redeemed people of the Lord, it is important to remember that we should not seek to outdo one another in our zeal to serve the Lord. When His disciples were disputing with one another over who shall be the greatest, our Lord Jesus reminded them that "if any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" [Mark 9:35]. Therefore, let us all take a step back and consider whether we are truly serving the Lord, or are we serving our own egos.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 25–26
PSALM 119:25–48

MEDITATION

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. – Romans 14:17–18

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 30:14–21***LESSON****God's Love****VERSE 17**

*And God hearkened unto
Leah, and she conceived,
and bare Jacob the fifth son.*

Leah's son Reuben found some mandrakes in the field during the days of wheat harvest and gave them to his mother. Tradition has it that mandrakes are medicinal plants used by women to increase their fertility. Recognising this, Rachel asked Leah to give the mandrakes to her.

Leah was initially reluctant and even chided Rachel for being more favoured by Jacob. Rachel struck a bargain with Leah by agreeing to let her spend the night with Jacob in exchange for the mandrakes. Leah agreed and, as a result, she bore Jacob her fifth son, Issachar. After that, Leah conceived again and bore another son, Zebulun, and a daughter, Dinah.

Leah must have thought that her childbearing days were over. She would be glad just to be able to spend some time with Jacob. However, God had a different plan for her, and blessed her with three more children. Although she was not favoured by Jacob, she was definitely favoured by God to be the mother of six of the tribes of Israel.

Let us learn a lesson here. God has shown His love for us, by sending His Son, our Lord Jesus, to die on the Cross for our sins. As God's beloved children, will He not give us the very best? If you find yourself unloved and neglected by a loved one, like Leah, remember God's love for you never fails and He is using you in whatever situation you may be in to be His channel of blessing, as you keep on trusting and serving Him regardless of your station in life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 27
PSALM 119:49–72

MEDITATION

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? – Matthew 7:11

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 30:22–24***LESSON****God remembered Rachel****VERSE 22**

And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.

Rachel had resorted to the human method of using the mandrake fruit, which was supposed to promote fruitfulness of the womb. However, she was not blessed with a child. God finally favoured Rachel after many long years of barrenness. This delayed answer to prayer is to teach Rachel the lessons of dependence upon God, as well as of patience, faith and hope. Whatever means we use to gain our ends, the ultimate success still depends upon the will of God. Rachel also grew spiritually in this exercise, even as she recognised the divine source of this blessing.

God hearkened to Rachel's prayer, opened her womb and made her fruitful. She became the mother of a child she so much desired. As a result, Joseph was born. He was to become the son who saved his family (the Israelites) during the time of famine.

Note that God also remembered Noah, Abraham, Jacob and Hannah. What have you been praying for all these years? Is it the salvation of a loved one? Do not give up hope. Persevere fervently and wait patiently for the Lord's perfect timing. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" [Isaiah 55:8–9].

Leave your prayers in the hands of our good Lord, and He will answer as He deems fit—with a 'yes', 'no' or 'wait'.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 28
PSALM 119:73–96

COMFORT

God is still on the throne and He will remember His own.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 30:25–30***LESSON****Channel of blessing****VERSE 27**

*And Laban said unto
him, I pray thee, if I have
found favour in thine eyes,
tarry: for I have learned by
experience that the LORD
hath blessed me for thy
sake.*

Jacob had fulfilled his 14-year work contract with his uncle, Laban. Now that Joseph, the son of promise, was born, he decided that it is time to be independent and move on, to return to his homeland for a family reunion. He was a diligent worker and God had blessed him bountifully.

Jacob made known his intention to Laban, who was very reluctant to let him go. Note that it was not because of love for his son-in-law, daughters or grandchildren but for personal interest. Laban prospered when Jacob was with him and he knew and acknowledged that this blessing came from God through Jacob: “I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake” [v. 27].

What a remarkable testimony! Not only was Jacob blessed but those who lived with him were, too. Likewise, our loved ones are often blessed with spiritual and material benefits on our account though they may not have the wisdom to discern or the grace to acknowledge it.

Laban was desperate to secure the continued services of his nephew and made a show of liberality for Jacob to state his salary [v. 28]. He said this craftily, not choosing to propose anything himself but leaving it to Jacob, knowing very well that Jacob would ask for wages lower than what he deserved. Jacob served Laban for another six years for a stipulated wage of livestock.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 29
PSALM 119:97–120

PRAYER**Make me a channel of blessing.**

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 30:31–36***LESSON****Jacob bargains with
Laban****VERSE 34**

*And Laban said, Behold, I
would it might be according
to thy word.*

This passage reveals Laban's selfish character in exploiting Jacob. Instead of paying his nephew his due wages, Laban took advantage of the deal made by Jacob. His covetous nature is seen in his readiness to accept Jacob's bargain, by which he stood to gain. In fact, what Jacob did was very unlike his character— not greedy but generous towards his uncle.

Jacob must have been reminded of his own deceit over the stolen blessing. His time with Laban after leaving home was filled with one deceit after another. Out of love for Rachel, Jacob had to serve 14 years working for his uncle. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying the elder daughter, Leah, for Jewish culture did not permit the younger daughter to be married first.

Human logic would claim that Jacob was back in his old wily, scheming ways again. What he did showed his knowledge and experience after years of shepherding. However, the following chapter [Genesis 31:9–12] confirms that it was of the Lord's doing. God will always take good care of His children who are willing to trust in His provision. Divine logic, on the other hand, claims that God is always in control of every situation. He noticed Laban's ill treatment of Jacob and rewarded the latter accordingly.

Let's take heed of Jacob's trust in God and do likewise. Do not worry about what tomorrow will bring for we know who holds tomorrow.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 30
PSALM 119:121–144

REMINDER

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. – Romans 12:17

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 30:37–43***LESSON****Jacob's prosperity****VERSE 43**

And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

Jacob's skill as a shepherd was at work here. He was a master of his trade, being both industrious and ingenious. His elaborate plan was executed very meticulously. His diligence paid off after trusting in God over the issue of the colour of the cattle. By divine direction, the cattle turned out to be ringstraked, speckled and grisled.

Jacob was comforted and encouraged by an angel of God in a dream. "For I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee" [Genesis 31:12b] shows that God cares for His own. This shows that we need not take matters into our own hands. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" [Romans 12:19b] is proof that our Lord Jesus will definitely right every wrong. God is always a very good paymaster to those who commit their cause to him, recompensing the oppressed.

Though Jacob was known for his scheming ways, the extraordinary incident mentioned here was divinely guided. The laws of genetics were not discovered before this incident, so it could only be of the Lord's doing.

"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" [Psalm 84:11b]. The truth of this has been proved throughout Scripture time and time again. From just a poor servant of Laban, Jacob became a very rich master. This enabled him to return to Canaan with his family. Just like Jacob, we must learn to trust in God for all our needs.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DEUTERONOMY 31
PSALM 119:145–176

PRAYER

Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. – 1 Peter 5:7

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 31:1–16***LESSON****The Lord appearing to Jacob****VERSE 13**

*I am the God of Beth-el,
where thou anointedst
the pillar, and where thou
vowedst a vow unto me:
now arise, get thee out from
this land, and return unto
the land of thy kindred.*

Jacob had prospered at Laban's expense. The change in attitude on the part of Laban and his sons brought about a change of plans for Jacob. Situations were such that made Jacob unable to stay safely with Laban. Jacob's flight back to Canaan is not prompted solely by the danger he faced. The Lord himself came to Jacob and called him to return to the land of his fathers.

Recent events pushed Jacob in the direction he should go. In like manner, today we often find God ordering our own circumstances to show us a path we should take. However, Jacob did not move until the Lord spoke to him clearly. Neither should we make decisions without seeking guidance in God's Word. God will often direct us by opening doors but we must be sure we have spent time in His Word before we determine which choices to make. Many times an available option may not be heaven-sent.

Is there a time in your life when you were closer to God than you are now? Believers in Christ have a personal walk with God. This is different from corporate or church affiliation. We can be very involved in church service and activities, yet not have a close fellowship with Christ.

The difference is doing and being. Church service and activities can become a substitute for a personal walk with God. We can be too caught up with our ministry that we forget God. On the other hand, it is equally true that if we are walking close to God, we will be connected with church service and activities.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 32
PSALMS 120–122

THOUGHT

When we fail to keep our hearts in tune with God, our lives quickly fall into discord and disarray.

BIBLE LESSON*Genesis 31:17–21***LESSON****Jacob's flight****VERSE 21**

So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead.

As young eagles mature, their parents will stir up the nest, making it increasingly uncomfortable so that their young will take flight. In the same way God made it increasingly uncomfortable for Jacob to remain with Laban in Mesopotamia.

Twenty years had passed. Circumstances strongly suggested that it was time for Jacob to return to the Land of Promise. Having received the assurance that his wives were in support of this move, Jacob hastily packed up all of their goods and left for home. God now guided Jacob towards the next phase of his journey. Jacob was about to risk his very life by fleeing from Laban and returning to Canaan.

Here is Jacob, his two wives, their children, servants, livestock and earthly possessions fleeing from the only home they knew together, across the Euphrates River and on towards the hills of Gilead, heading for home. He did not leave well but perhaps he had no choice. One of his wives, Rachel, had also stolen from her father as they fled. Certainly, there would not be much chance of a family reconciliation in the future under these conditions.

God often guides us through circumstances, through people who are close to us, and through His own prompting in our hearts. He used each of these methods in the life of Jacob. Like Jacob, when God guides us we must go. Our lives are best when we faithfully follow His will. Even when God clearly leads us and people support us, stepping out in obedience carries certain risks. Never disregard God's guiding voice.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DEUTERONOMY 33–34
PSALMS 123–125

THOUGHT

God always expects us to take bold risks in order to follow His will.

