

Faithbuilders Devotional Series

January

Through the Bible in a Year
A Daily Devotional

Pastors Mike Fast & David Curtis

Welcome to a special devotional:

If I were to ask Bible believing Christians whether or not they had ever read through the entire New Testament only one in three would answer yes. You can imagine how few I would find who had read through the entire Old *and* New Testaments. We know the importance of studying our manual for life, but it often becomes something we put off doing.

By setting aside just 15 minutes each day we can read through the entire Bible. Some of us set aside that much time each day to read through the newspaper, or through a favorite magazine or book, or watch our favorite sitcom or news show.

We know there are a variety of options for each of us as to how we can achieve reading through the Bible, yet *“this devotional is specifically designed with the purpose of helping you get through the Bible this year.”*

This reading devotional takes a fresh approach and walks through the Bible chronologically (in the order each event occurred). It also concentrates on a new theme each week and provides study questions useful personally or in a group session.

The passages are laid out in an easy to follow manner and the devotionals themselves maintain a very practical approach. Our quotes come from the New Living Translation, a good interpretive work, making each passage fresh and contemporary.

Many have used this devotional and have accomplished their goal of reading through the Bible in a year, and some for the very first time.

More than anything, we just want to encourage each of you to make reading through God’s Word a priority this year. And may you be encouraged as God’s Word touches your life. “For the word of God is living and active” (Hebrews 4:12).

Pastors Mike Fast and David Curtis

Day 31 – January 31st
Job 40:6-42:17 – Political Power?

Today I received my voters' pamphlet in the mail giving me details on all the candidates involved in the upcoming election. I don't know about you, but I have become a bit of a political cynic. Every candidate promises to have the solutions to all the problems we face, but once their term is up, the problems remain. I am so thankful that God's power is not a political power. God was not elected to His position and His power is not subject to anyone else.

As you read the closing chapter of Job today, you noticed that God chose to bless Job. God did not have to defend that decision to anyone. He didn't have to get the approval of the House or the Senate. God's promises are not like those of a politician. Because of God's power, we know that every last one of his promises will come true. Do you trust in God's promises? What about God's power? Do you believe that God has the power to accomplish whatever he desires? We must first believe in the power of God before we can trust in His promises; otherwise God is nothing more than a politician.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 1 – January 1st – 7th
Genesis 1-24

This week's readings will cover the first 24 chapters of Genesis along with a little bit of the genealogies from 1 Chronicles. Each day we are going to look at the issue of faith in more detail. We will talk about our need for faith in God and we will look at examples of faith in the lives of Abel, Noah and Abraham. My prayer is that, by the end of this week, your faith would be strengthened and maybe even challenged a little bit.

Bible Discussion Guide

How do you define faith?

What examples of faith do we see in this week's reading?

Are there any of these examples that you particularly relate with?

Have you ever known someone who has what you would call extreme faith like Abraham? Who?

What was it about their faith that would cause you to refer to it as extreme?

Read Genesis chapter 22 as a group:

How was Abraham’s faith tested?

How has your faith been tested?

How did you respond to that test?

What did you learn about God through that experience?

How has your faith been deepened as a result of the testing?

Are you having difficulty trusting God with a particular area in your life right now? Are you willing to share that struggle with your small group?

Why are you struggling with trusting God in this area?

Day 30 – January 30th
Job 38:1-40:5 – Creator

The work of creation is one of the greatest evidences of God’s power. He uses it here to help Job understand how great the Almighty One is.

On the first day of this month you read the biblical account of creation. Many of us take God’s creation for granted and have lost sight of the magnitude of what God did. Mankind has become quite skilled at creating different things from automobiles to computers; we can make some pretty amazing stuff. However, no one has ever created something *ex nihilo*, or ‘out of nothing’ as God did. It is not as though God brought together the raw materials of the universe and followed the instruction manual. No, he simply spoke things into existence. His creative power is beyond all that we can imagine. “In the beginning God created...” (Gen. 1:1). God has always existed. We may not be able to fully comprehend this, and we certainly cannot create *ex nihilo*, but we can accept it and believe just as Job did (40:3-5).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 29 – January 29th
Job 35-37 – Omnipotence

Elihu makes the statement in 36:22 that God is all powerful. Theologians refer to this as omnipotence, which is the teaching that God has the power to accomplish all that He wills to do. Elihu also gives us two key applications of this truth.

The first is that God doesn't need us to instruct Him in what to do or how to do something (36:23). In fact, God doesn't need us at all. He is perfect in His existence. Are you like me? Have you ever found yourself trying to instruct God in how to accomplish something? A better way is to receive instruction and direction from an all-powerful God.

The second application is that we should have a response of joy to God's omnipotence (37:1). Have you ever wanted to do something, but were powerless to accomplish it? God never experiences that. How hopeless would our lives be if God were powerless to accomplish His desires.

May you, like Elihu, find joy in knowing that God has the power to fulfill His good purposes in your life.

My Prayer List:

How has God shown Himself to be trustworthy in similar areas in the past?

Personal application: You can express your renewed faith and trust in God for this area of your life right now.

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your faithfulness in all areas of my life. Please forgive me for not fully trusting you with

I truly desire to trust you in all areas of my life, please help my faith to grow by the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 1 – January 1st
Genesis 1-3 – Paradise Lost

God’s creation was perfect in every way, shape, and form, “God looked over all He had made, and He saw that it was excellent in every way...” (Gen. 1:31)

I have often pondered what life would be like if Adam and Eve had chosen obedience that day in the garden. I would imagine that Satan would have shown up the next day to tempt them again. After all, he is the deceiver and father of lies; he is in the business of tempting mankind.

However, no matter how many times I ponder this thought, the story never changes. On that fateful day, sin and death entered into the entire human race (Rom. 5:12). But by the grace of God that is not the whole story. In fact, you need not read past today’s reading to find hope for mankind. In God’s judgment upon the serpent is a foreshadowing of Jesus’ triumph over sin and death at the cross. The offspring or seed of the woman that will crush the serpent is the first mention of God’s redemptive plan for mankind. So, reader, take hope. There is more to the story, oh, and please keep reading.

My Prayer List:

Personal application: Is God’s power real for you? Are you experiencing joy as a result? In what ways does God need to soften your heart?

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Do you trust in God's promises without recognizing his power?
What is the danger in this thinking?

Reflect on the events of Moses' life you read this last week. How was God's power demonstrated in his life?

Moses' reluctance to lead served as a roadblock to God's power working through him. How have you created roadblocks to God working through your life?

The Israelites doubted God's power when Pharaoh increased their workload. How have you doubted God's power when life gets difficult?

How was God's power demonstrated through the plagues?

Pharaoh hardened his heart in response to God's power. In what ways have you allowed your heart to harden?

Day 2 – January 2nd

Genesis 4-6; 1 Chronicles 1:1-4 – Without faith it is impossible to please God – Hebrews 11:6

So why exactly was Abel's offering accepted by God and not Cain's offering? Some have argued that it is because Abel sacrificed an animal while Cain only brought produce of the ground. However, both grains and animals are used in the sacrificial system of the old covenant.

To find out why God accepted one and not the other, we have to go to the New Testament book of Hebrews. In Hebrews 11:4 we see that it was a matter of faith that made Abel's offering stand out. This issue of faith is one that comes up time and again in the scriptures. God is more concerned with our faith than with the externals of religion and public service. Certainly Cain brought an offering for the same reason as Abel. However, for Abel, it was an expression of faith, but for Cain it was religious duty. How do you approach the worship of God? Do you worship God from your heart because you have faith in His promises? Or do you worship out of duty or obligation or because someone is watching? May your worship be like that of Abel.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 3 – January 3rd

Genesis 7-10; 1 Chronicles 1:5-23 – Faith is believing without seeing

This last year our family watched the animated movie *Chicken Little*. In that movie the lead character, Chicken Little, warns everyone in town that the sky is falling. Of course he is ridiculed for taking a stand on this issue. I think Noah may have felt somewhat like Chicken Little. 2 Peter 2:5 says that, “Noah warned the world of God’s righteous judgment.” Can you imagine the response Noah would have received from these wicked people?

Noah had faith in God. He was unfazed by the critics. He was undaunted by the challenge of building such a large boat (without the help of Home Depot!). Noah was the only one who heeded God’s warning. Noah acted in faith. He didn’t need God to prove anything. He believed in God’s Word and acted accordingly. Are you willing to listen to God’s Word and act accordingly? Or are you still waiting for God to prove himself? Exercising faith means to take God at His Word and act appropriately. May you be doers of the Word and not merely hearers of it.

My Prayer List:

Week 5 – January 29th – February 4th

Job 35-42; Exodus 1-12

The theme for this week is God’s power. As you read this week, you will be challenged to consider the power of God in your life. The lives of Job and Moses will serve as the backdrop for your personal reflection. The second half of this week’s devotionals will appear in the February issue of this series. May you, this week, be confronted with the reality of God’s power in your life.

Bible Discussion Guide

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of God’s power?

How have you seen God’s power at work in every day life?

This week we read the conclusion of Job’s saga. How was God’s power evident in Job’s life?

The devotional for January 29th stated that the power of God should bring joy into our lives. How has God’s power been a source of joy for you?

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 28 – January 28th
Job 32-34 – Consistency

Job’s three friends were absolutely convinced that he had some hidden fault which would explain why he had to suffer. Job affirms his innocence in chapter 31, which incidentally, I would challenge you to read with the intent of asking how you would measure up. I imagine very few could honestly claim what Job could.

Yet, after Job and his three friends are done throwing their theories around, Elihu takes his turn. The young Elihu notes how Job is becoming a bit arrogant in some of his replies and justifications. Elihu questions the “wisdom” of Job’s friends, and yet Elihu has a theory or two of his own that may not be entirely on target. Elihu still connects Job’s testing to sin (34:11), but Elihu does make some wonderful statements about God’s providence and justice.

There is a great lesson here for us. Each man’s speech contained much truth, but every now and then a false assumption came to the surface. The fact: 100% of our assumptions had better be consistent with the Word of God.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 4 – January 4th
Genesis 11-14; 1 Chronicles 1:24-27 – If you say go, we will go

In our church, we sing a song with that line it. As I think about what God asked Abram to do I thought about that song. Like many of you, I am prone to sing worship music without allowing the meaning of the words to sink in. Abram, as he was known at this point, embodied what this song is all about. God gave Abram a directive to go to a foreign land. He didn’t ask Abram to go or if he even wanted to go. God commanded Abram to go.

Amazingly enough, Abram responded in faith and obeyed God’s command. Genesis 12:1 reveals some of the magnitude of this move, “leave your country, your relatives, and your father’s house...” Basically God told Abram to abandon all that he knew – every source of security and comfort and to stake his whole life on God.

It is hard to imagine a greater example of faith. If God were to tell you to go, would you go? Are you willing to step out in faith and stake your life on God and his promises? May you have faith like Abram to do just that.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 5 – January 5th
Genesis 15-17 – A crisis of faith

Have you ever found yourself really struggling in your faith? If so, you have something in common with Abram. In spite of God’s powerful promises and constant provision for his needs, Abram was struggling to believe that God’s promises would materialize. God had already promised that Abram would “become the father of a great nation” (Gen. 12:2). However, after ten years (16:3), Abram was growing impatient (15:2-3).

Even though the Lord reassured Abram of his promises, Abram decided to take matters into his own hands. This led to Abram fathering a child with Hagar. Clearly, in the chapters we have read today, Abram was struggling with the Lord’s timing.

Are you struggling like Abram? Trust in the Lord’s timing. Exercise patience and remember what the Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah, “For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 27 – January 27th
Job 30-31 – Trials

It is supposed to be: “It’s always darkest just before the dawn,” but my aunt, who has been through an amazing number of trials in her life, has said, “It’s always darkest just before it goes totally black.” Job stated nearly the exact thing, “I waited for the light, but darkness fell” (30:26).

Job defines trials for us in chapter 30. A trial is not some mild irritation, but rather an intense painful event. He defines his trial with words like: anguish, gloom, persecution, humiliation, desolation, affliction and darkness.

We can float through a mild irritation and come out unproven.

However, nothing tests our faith as effectively or honestly as an intense trial. A true trial will test our love, faith, obedience, endurance, patience and much more. We will come face-to-face with what we really believe about God and His purpose and power. We will see first-hand how we react. Are we critical and callous? We will see every aspect of our character become truly tested.

May we use even our trials as a means to glorify God as He shapes our life.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 26 – January 26th

Job 25-29 – Where to Find Wisdom

Mankind can achieve great things. Does that make him wise? Do years of schooling and academic degrees make a man wise? If a man is worth millions of dollars does that make him wise?

The answer to all of these questions is no. True wisdom is found in one realization, and Job and many other Bible writers give the same answer. It is found in the “fear of the LORD” (28:28).

Fearing the LORD is the understanding of who God is. We recognize His power as we call Him Creator and Judge. We gratefully respect Him as we identify Him as our Heavenly Father and seek to worship, please Him and turn from evil.

True wisdom makes things so clear. There are days I hear the world claim some act of wisdom that, to me, does not seem like even common sense. Perhaps that is what the Apostle Paul meant when he stated that God has made the world’s philosophers, scholars, and brilliant debaters all look foolish and has shown their wisdom to be useless nonsense (1 Cor. 1:20). Job had discovered that fact as well.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 6 – January 6th

Genesis 18:1-21:7 – “The Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials” – 2 Peter 2:9

You wouldn’t know by today’s reading that Lot “was a righteous man who was distressed by the wickedness he saw and heard day after day” (2 Peter 2:8). Peter gives us that insight to Lot’s heart. Have you ever felt like Lot? Are you worn down and beyond frustration with the world around you? Well, if you are, then fear not. As the verse that serves as our title for today says, the Lord knows how to rescue people. All hope is not lost because God will have the final say.

God provided a way of escape for Lot from the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. God has also provided a way of escape for you from the wickedness of this world. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have the confidence in knowing that we will be with the Father when we die, or even better, when Jesus returns. So, reader, do not despair, if you have trusted in Christ, your day of escape is coming. You will only have to endure the wickedness of this world for a short season before you can enjoy eternity with God.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 7 – January 7th
Genesis 21-24 – Extreme Faith

“I couldn’t do it, I just couldn’t do it,” Abraham said to Sarah. “Whatever do you mean, Abraham?” she asked. “Well, God asked me to offer up Isaac as a burnt offering and I just couldn’t do it,” he said.

Aren’t you glad your Bible doesn’t read that way? I have often wondered if it were my faith being tested, how the story would have turned out. Abraham had an extreme faith in God. It wasn’t that Abraham was calling God’s bluff or knew it was only a test. No, he was ready to do exactly what God asked of Him. Hebrews 11:19 says, “Abraham assumed that if Isaac died, God was able to bring him back to life again...”

Abraham had to trust God with Isaac’s life. Are you willing to do the same? Now, God isn’t asking you to physically sacrifice your life or the life of a loved one, but he is asking you to die to yourself and trust Him with your life.

My Prayer List:

Day 25 – January 25th
Job 22-25 – Is It Fair?

God “gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45).

Eliphaz, for the third time, tells Job his suffering is because of his wickedness. Job answers Eliphaz with a philosophical observation when he asks Eliphaz why the wicked are not always being punished. He says they can steal and harm without penalty.

However, as he continues, he also notes that death consumes them, people forget them, and true assurance eludes them.

We are often guilty of the same kind of thinking as Eliphaz, that punishment must be as a result of wrong actions. Yet, this side of judgment, that is not always true of the saved or the unsaved. God’s thoughts and methods are nothing like ours (Isa. 55:8,9). He is patient and is not bound to our time schedule. God is fully aware of everything and everyone (Job 25:23), and His judgment will be fair and certain.

Graciously remember that Christ died for all—the just and the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Is there a downside to choosing God's will on a consistent basis?

If not, then why is it sometimes a struggle?

How confident do you feel with the choices God sovereignly makes?

Do you ever struggle with the direction he sometimes sends you?

Discuss the potential difference (and some examples) between legality and ethics.

Personal application: What do you base your choices on? How consistently? How much peace does your life reveal when God takes you a different direction?

Day 23 – January 23rd
Job 15-18 – Is It Proud or Appropriate?

Three of Job's friends showed up after his intense time of suffering. For seven days and nights they sat silent with him. Their time of silently grieving with their friend is a beautiful and powerful example of concern.

But then they began to talk, they reasoned and tried to explain why this could be happening, concluding that the blame fell on Job.

Today's passage points out an interesting trait (or perhaps flaw) in human character. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar were older than Job's father (15:10). They were not just peers, but men who believed they held the right answers. They all took a turn discussing their theory with Job. Then, starting at chapter 15 they each took a second turn. In chapter 22 they started a third round. In each instance they were not stating new ideas, but stating their original ideas more forcefully.

Job gave them a fitting reply, "I have heard all of this before. What miserable comforters you are!" (16:1). Remember, the wise use few words, and the comforter does not use the opportunity to prove a point.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 22 – January 22nd
Job 12-14 – Tested Truth

Job was a righteous man whom God permitted to endure an awful time of testing, pain and hurt. Job struggles with some of his own thoughts as well as some imprudent thoughts from his friends. Yet, as he reasons through these thoughts (which we are privileged to read), we see that he often makes some very insightful observations.

In today’s reading, he makes statements such as: “The life of every living thing is in God’s hand, and the breath of all humanity” (12:10), “Oh, how I long to speak directly to the Almighty. I want to argue my case with God himself” (13:3), “How frail is humanity! How short is life, and how full of trouble!” (14:1).

Job is learning the value of experience. I could quote all the correct spiritual answers without going through a single test, but after the testing comes, those answers take on a different perspective.

What good is a test in our life? It can produce a deeper conviction of truth. It can get us out of a stagnant phase in life. It gives our answers a valid dimension.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 8 – January 8th
Genesis 25:1-26; 1 Chronicles 1:28-34 – Choices

Abraham had several wives and children. Yet, God chose Sarah, not Hagar or Keturah, to be the mother of Isaac, the child of promise. God likewise chose Isaac long before he was ever born to be the heir of Abraham.

We also read of God choosing Jacob as the child of promise as opposed to his twin brother Esau, the one who, traditionally speaking, since he was the firstborn, should have been the heir of promise.

In Romans 9, the Apostle Paul uses the story of Jacob and Esau to illustrate God’s choices. It’s interesting to remember that years later Jacob was used to bless Joseph’s son Ephraim instead of the older one Manasseh as even another example of God’s choosing.

According to Romans 9, God’s choices are determined by His will. Prayerfully our choices are in line with His will as well.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 9 – January 9th
Genesis 25:27-28:5 – What’s in a Name

Yesterday we were introduced to someone before they were born, namely, a boy who was wrestling within his mother’s womb (25:22). The boy was born grasping the heel of his older twin brother.

He was given the name, Jacob. The meaning of the name had somewhat to do with his “heel catching” event, but it also has to do with “tricking” or “deceiving.” Did Jacob do anything in his life to earn the title “deceiver?”

Well, there was the time he carried out an underhanded plan for acquiring his brother’s birthright. Then, he deceptively receives his father’s blessing, generally reserved for the oldest. Later, there was the reason he would leave Esau’s presence, which was not presented as pure truth.

Jacob’s life of deceit is beginning to catch up with him. A life of deceit will catch up with us as well if our actions are deceptive and our choices are self-seeking.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

What have you learned about the “true you” during an intense trial?

During an intense trial, how has your “traditional” thinking about God been challenged? Did your faith change for the better as a result of the trial?

Is the “true you” consistent (harmonious) with what others see Sunday morning?

As you reflect on the various devotionals for this week, how would you interpret the phrase, “consistency is an indicator of success”?

Personal application: What areas of your life could you develop a greater godly consistency in?

Week 4 – January 22nd – 28th
Job 12-34

The theme for this week has to do with consistency. There are a variety of topics, but consistency is an indicator of success within each area. For instance: Are we consistent in how we interpret the Word of God? Are we displaying consistency in our life, as it pertains to godly character, as we go through an intense trial?

Bible Discussion Guide

What is your first reaction to an intense trial? Do you try to simplify it, explain it, or justify it?

Would you consider your first response in accordance with traditional thinking, or Biblical wisdom, or human reasoning?

Why is it that our tendency seems to lean more to explaining than accepting?

Do you believe that an intense trial test the “true you” far more than anything else could?

Day 10 – January 10th
Genesis 28:6-30:24 – New Life, New Lessons

The character of Jacob is beginning to change, from deceiver to believer. There appears to be no evidence of Jacob’s conversion before chapter 28. In Genesis 27:20 Jacob referred to the God of Abraham and of Isaac as “your God.” Now, in chapter 28 Jacob affirmed, “I will make the LORD my God” (v. 21). When you read through chapter 32, you find that Jacob, who was a deceiver, is not only now a believer, but his name is changed by God to Israel.

Jacob was over 70 years old when he takes off on his 400-mile journey north to Haran. He works seven years for his Uncle Laban in exchange for Rachel’s hand in marriage, but Laban deceives Jacob and obligates him to an additional seven years.

Now, Jacob, who had deceived others, has felt the pain of deceit himself. As the story continues we find a few other unfortunate consequences of his earlier life of mistakes-some were that others had learned the art of deception (31:35).

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 11 – January 11th
Genesis 30:25-31:55 – Ethics

By chapter 32 Jacob has transformed spiritually, but here in chapter 31, Jacob lacked any ethical system in his life. For Jacob, legality was equated with morality, and there are many people who fall into this category. That is, anything which was not contrary to the law was no problem for his conscience. Jacob did not break the law in anything he did, but he trifled with ethics. Jacob's contract with Laban and his manipulation of the flocks in order to prosper at Laban's expense was hardly ethical, but it was strictly legal—so much so, in fact, that he could later challenge Laban to accuse him of any infractions of their agreement (31:36-42).

Laban had lived and worked closely together with Jacob for 20 years, and he was convinced of Jacob's lack of integrity. He had felt cheated by him before. Now Jacob leaves at a time when Laban is busy elsewhere. Laban comes back and finds that his precious idols have been stolen and Jacob is gone. When he does catch up with him, the first tent he searches is Jacob's.

My Prayer List:

Day 21 – January 21st
Job 8-11 – God's sovereignty hits home

There is a difference between knowing truth about God and allowing that truth to impact how we live our lives. The same day I started writing about God's sovereignty in Job's life, I was diagnosed with pinkeye and was coming down with a nasty cold. I was miserable. Worse than that, I had become grouchy and irritable and was acting like a jerk (best word to describe it) to my family. After two days of my inappropriate behavior my wife had to confront me about it. I knew I was acting out, but it hit me like a ton of bricks when she said it. I realized how much of a hypocrite I had been for writing about God's sovereignty in Job's life while not allowing His sovereignty to control my life. I entirely ignored the fact that even though I felt bad, God was still in control and had a purpose for all this. Are you like me? Have you lost sight of God's sovereignty in your life? Are you allowing life's circumstances to dictate your behavior rather than the truth of God's Word? I want to encourage you to take a step back, reevaluate, and recommit to living with God's sovereignty as a constant reality in your life.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 20 – January 20th

Job 5-7 – God ways are higher than our ways

“God’s ways are as hard to discern as the pathways of the wind, and as mysterious as a tiny baby being formed in a mother’s womb” (Eccl. 11:5).

I would imagine that at this moment Job would very much relate to the above verse. Job is struggling to reconcile his current state with how he has lived his life. We all struggle with this same issue; we often ask the question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” This may be an exclusively American question, though, because the majority of us live a charmed life compared to the rest of the world.

A key principle we learn from Job is that living a righteous life will not guarantee a life free of trials and grief. The purpose of living a righteous life or a life of obedience to God is not to manipulate God into blessing us, but rather to bring pleasure to our Heavenly Father who loves us.

My Prayer List:

Day 12 – January 12th

Genesis 32:1-35:27 – Expectations and Assumptions

It is almost hard to imagine the amount of anxiety Jacob was experiencing as he prepared to meet his brother, Esau. Chapter 32 lets us in on some of that anxiety. After all, it had been 20 years since they had last met and, at that point, Esau was prepared to kill Jacob.

But when they met... things could not have gone better. Perhaps it was just the passing of time, perhaps it was God at work on two hearts, perhaps it was a realigning of values and understanding the importance of their relationship over anything else, or perhaps it was a combination of all the above.

Jacob and Esau had both seen the blessings of the LORD in the years gone by. They had both learned the value of forgiveness and the ugliness of bitterness.

Jacob’s false expectations and assumptions put off an event that he should have perhaps done much earlier. Sometimes we are guilty of justifying something in our mind and putting something off that we should be doing.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 13 – January 13th

Genesis 36; 1 Chronicles 1:35-2:2 – God’s Course

Prior to the births of Jacob and Esau, the LORD said to Rebekah, “The sons in your womb will become two rival nations. One nation will be stronger than the other; the descendants of your older son will serve the descendants of your younger son.” (25:23).

The descendants of Jacob were the Israelites, while the descendants of Esau were the Edomites. Though both were descendants of Isaac, there were not many similarities. During the Exodus, God told Israel to leave the Edomites alone because they were relatives. However, Edom refused to let them enter the land, and later they became bitter enemies of King David.

God’s prophetic words rang true once again. “God’s plans will not be thwarted” (Job 42:2).

My Prayer List:

Day 19 – January 19th

Job 1-4 – Sovereign over all creation

Nothing exists that doesn’t fall under God’s sovereignty. This profound truth extends even to the existence of evil. Many have wondered why God allows evil to exist, but this question is ultimately futile because we cannot change the fact that it does exist. What we must focus on is how to live appropriately in light of the fact that evil is present in this world.

A large part of that issue is the ability to put Satan and his evil forces into a proper context. Satan is not the evil equal of God; rather he is a created being, a fallen angel who will ultimately be defeated by our great and glorious God (Rev. 20:10). The story of Job helps us to understand the proper context of evil. God, in His sovereignty, grants Satan a measure of authority in Job’s life. So we know that Satan and evil are real and have significant power and authority in this world. However, none of it is beyond the sovereignty of God. Thus, in spite of evil, the believer can rejoice in the sovereignty of God and the knowledge of the Lord’s ultimate victory.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 18 – January 18th

Genesis 47:28-50:26 – Looking to the future

Genesis 50:24 foreshadows the events of the book of Exodus as God led Israel out of Egypt. Joseph is speaking of a future time when God will lead His people back to the Promised Land. Why is it that Joseph can make this statement with any amount of confidence? It is because Joseph believes in the sovereignty of God. He experienced the hand of God in his own life and he was taught about the great promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, so he has no difficulty in knowing that God will act on His promises.

God’s sovereignty is part of the reason we can have hope for the future. God’s promises concerning the future would be meaningless if He is not sovereign. His ability to bring about His plan of redemption would be subject to failure if He wasn’t sovereign. Joseph did not worry over the future of Israel for he knew God’s sovereignty. Do you worry or fret over the future? We all do at times, but those who trust in a sovereign God are not consumed by such worry. What a blessing to know that God is in control of our future.

My Prayer List:

Day 14 – January 14th

Genesis 37-39; 1 Chronicles 2:3-6, 8 – Godly Direction

Joseph was a man of integrity, ethics and conviction. God had unique, although specific, direction for Joseph’s life. And furthermore, God gave Joseph’s life direction. Has God given your life direction?

At 17, Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. He became a servant in the house of Potiphar. The Lord blessed his work and faithfulness. The direction of Joseph’s life changed again as Potiphar’s wife actively pursued Joseph, and when she found his convictions and integrity to be so well grounded that he would not sin with her, she decided to lie about him committing a terrible act of sin upon her. And, because of her lie, Joseph was put in prison.

After a few more years, Joseph will go from pit to palace yet again. His life was far from comfortable, yet God honored his steadfastness and obedience to Him.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Week 3 – January 15th – 21st
Genesis 35:28-29; 40:1-50:26; Job 1-11

The theme for this week is the sovereignty of God. *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* defines the Sovereignty of God as “The biblical teaching that God is king, supreme ruler, and lawgiver of the entire universe.”

We will see this important truth in the lives of two men, Joseph and Job. In Joseph’s life we see him go from being wrongly imprisoned to second in command in all of Egypt. In the life of Job we will meet a righteous man who must come to grips with trials and tribulations that are brought into his life. Each day this week you will see God’s sovereignty powerfully demonstrated in the lives of these two men.

I also want to add a word about why you are reading Job right after Genesis. Job is a godly man but makes no mention of God’s law given to Moses and he performs his own sacrifices (Job 42:8). Both of these would not make sense if Job lived after Moses. Scholars generally agree that the events of Job best fit during the time of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob).

Bible Discussion Guide

In what ways does God’s sovereignty impact our lives?

How would life be different if God was not sovereign?

Review the events of Joseph’s life. How did God demonstrate His sovereignty in Joseph’s life?

Day 17 – January 17th
Genesis 45:16-47:27 – The beauty of God’s sovereignty.

There are many important truths that are related to or find their origins in the sovereignty of God. In today’s reading I am struck by God’s provision for Jacob and his family. God demonstrated his faithfulness to Jacob by providing a way of escape during these terrible years of famine.

From time to time I will meet someone who doesn’t want to acknowledge that God is sovereign. They want to ignore that God is indeed ruler of His creation. However, at the same time they are praying for God to provide for their needs. Ignoring God’s sovereignty and asking for his provision is a contradiction for God’s ability to provide is dependent on His absolute sovereignty. If God were subject to some external force, then His ability to meet our needs would be limited. I hope you see that it isn’t a restriction of our freedom to believe in God’s sovereignty. To the contrary, His sovereignty allows us to trust in His promises, care and provision, which will truly set us free.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

Day 16 – January 16th

Genesis 42:1-45:15 – To God be the glory; great things He has done.

Joseph gives God full credit for ending up in Egypt and for his position as second only to Pharaoh. He recognizes that it was the hand of God in his life all this time. When Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, or when he was falsely accused and jailed by Potiphar, or when he was forgotten by Pharaoh's cupbearer for two years, he knew that God's hand was guiding his life.

Like Joseph, are you able to give God the glory for what he has done in your life? Joseph's life was far from easy. There were good times and bad, but in it all, Joseph recognized that God was in control.

Are you in a difficult stage of life? Do not despair, for God is in control. Is life seemingly perfect for you right now? Great, but don't be proud, for all you have is from God. So no matter what stage of life you are in, you ought to give glory to God as Joseph did.

My Prayer List:

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____

How did Joseph react to the negative events in his life?

How did he react to the positive events?

In your own life, what are some ways God has revealed his sovereignty?

How have you reacted to negative events?

What about to positive events?

What have you learned from studying the life of Joseph that will impact how you react to life's circumstances in the future?

We also read the first 11 chapters of Job this last week. In what ways did God demonstrate his sovereignty over Job's life?

The devotional for January 19th stated that nothing exists outside of God’s sovereignty, including evil. How does this truth impact our lives?

Have you ever experienced a time when you didn’t understand what was happening in your life? How did you respond?

What can we learn from Job’s response that will help us to respond appropriately to difficult circumstances?

Personal Application: What is one thing you were able to take away from studying the lives of Joseph and Job that will change the way you live?

Day 15 – January 15th

Genesis 35:28-29; 40:1-41:57 – “It is better to be a poor but wise youth than to be an old and foolish king...Such a youth could come from prison and succeed” (Ecclesiastes 4:13-14a).

It was a courageous choice full of integrity that landed Joseph in jail, but it was the sovereign hand of God that brought him out. Joseph had no ability to change his position. Through the series of events you read today, God brought about restoration for Joseph. However, it is not as though Joseph didn’t do anything. I see three key things Joseph did:

- 1) Joseph worked hard for the chief jailer,
- 2) Joseph exercised wisdom and the gift of interpreting dreams,
- 3) Joseph exercised patience, spending over two years in jail.

My Prayer List: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Indeed Joseph did his part and so did God. God orchestrated different meetings, gave dreams to people, and gave Joseph the wisdom and ability to interpret those dreams. Thus we see an important principle: God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility work hand in hand in our lives.

Taking every thought captive to Christ: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
