



FEBRUARY 2020 | DAY 8

# ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

With Fellowship of the Rockies

## SCRIPTURE

**Genesis 25**  
**Genesis 26**  
**Genesis 27**  
**Genesis 28**  
**Psalms 8**

After Abraham's death, God's blessing continues through his children and grandchildren. In a surprising reversal of ancient cultural expectations, God chooses Isaac's younger son, Jacob, to inherit the blessing. Today's video shows how God subverts the expected firstborn privileges that often lead to contentious rivalries. This upheaval of cultural norms can be an invitation for people to use their privilege to serve (rather than compete with) others.

"Jacob" means "deceiver," and he lives up to the name. Rather than trusting God to provide abundance, security, and blessing, Jacob schemes and takes these things for himself. Notice how the biblical authors rarely give direct moral commentary on people like Jacob. Instead, we're invited to assess a person's behavior by seeing the consequences of their decisions.

Consider the way Jacob and his family treat God's blessing, for example. Although God chose Jacob, Isaac wants to give the blessing to Esau, his favored son. The brothers barter an immeasurable blessing over a measly bowl of soup. Rebekah and Jacob lie, cheat, and steal to take the blessing rather than trusting God's promise. All this scheming leads to bitterness and division within the family.

Is God really going to rescue humanity through such a dysfunctional family? Believe it or not—yes! When Jacob flees into exile, God speaks to him in a dream. He makes the same promise to Jacob as he did to Abraham: to bless all humanity through him. We may have reasonable doubts about Jacob, but God remains committed to his covenant partnership with Abraham's family, imperfections and all.



FEBRUARY 2020 | DAY 9

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## SCRIPTURE

**Genesis 29**  
**Genesis 30**  
**Genesis 31**  
**Psalms 9**

**Scheming leads to more scheming.** In today's reading, you'll watch Jacob and his extended family perpetuate a pattern of cheating, lying, and stealing for personal gain. Jacob and Laban spend years swindling each other. Jacob's favoritism sparks a new sibling rivalry, this time between his wives. Rachel and Leah abuse their slaves in a bitter competition for more children.

The tragic irony is that God already promised to bless Jacob with abundance. But Jacob trusts his wisdom over the God of his fathers. Jacob lies and cheats at every turn, leaving relational wreckage in his wake. Jacob's story will shatter any illusion that God's blessings depend upon the moral integrity of Abraham's family. Fortunately, God's promises to humans have always rested on his faithfulness, not theirs.

With Laban infuriated, Jacob flees once again due to the fallout of his selfish decisions. But when Laban storms up to his nephew's camp, God intervenes to bring a surprising and peaceful resolution to their decades-long conflict.

Jacob has done everything he can to forfeit the blessing, yet God stays by his side. During Jacob's time with Laban, he accumulates a large family and great wealth. But the scheming also produces envy, bitterness, and conflict. How will God partner with a man so determined to do things his own way?



FEBRUARY 2020 | DAY 10

# ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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## SCRIPTURE

**Genesis 32**  
**Genesis 33**  
**Genesis 34**  
**Psalms 10**

**In the last encounter between the brothers, Jacob tricked Esau out of his blessing and ran away. In today's reading, the estranged brothers prepare to reunite. As Esau approaches, Jacob panics and, as usual, turns to selfish schemes for protection. First, he sends a huge gift of livestock to temper Esau's anger. Then, he puts his wives and children ahead of him in the caravan and takes the safest spot in the rear.**

**But the night before the reunion, in one of the most famous scenes of the Hebrew Bible, Jacob wrestles with God. The struggle mirrors the story of Jacob's life: struggling for blessing through manipulation and deceit, while ruining relationships along the way. So God wounds Jacob to teach him that blessing comes through weakness and dependence, not schemes. He gives Jacob, "the deceiver," a new name: Israel, which means "struggles with God."**

**For a moment, the wrestling match changes Jacob. He leads the caravan and greets his brother with humility. In a surprising twist, Esau showers Jacob with generosity and love rather than anger. But Jacob soon reverts to his old ways, lying to Esau and abandoning him.**

**Jacob's evasiveness results in his family settling in Shechem, where one of the local men sexually assaults his daughter, Dinah. This horrific moment exposes the consequences of Jacob's lifelong rejection of God's wisdom. To make matters worse, Jacob's refusal to seek justice on Dinah's behalf provokes his sons to evil and treachery. Without a wise father's guidance, they weaponize the covenant sign of circumcision as they seek vengeance. And so another generation of Abraham's family descends into chaos and violence. Will this downward spiral ever end?**



FEBRUARY 2020 | DAY 11

# ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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## SCRIPTURE

**Genesis 35**  
**Genesis 36**  
**Genesis 37**  
**Psalm 11**

**After running, scheming, and wrestling with God, Jacob ends up walking with a limp toward a new future. When God tells him to move back to Bethel, Jacob obeys and acknowledges God's protection throughout his tumultuous life. God reaffirms his unwavering promise to bless the world through Jacob's family. God is advancing the Edenic blessing to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28) with his promise of land, descendants, and kings to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3, 17:16). God continues to honor this promise through Jacob and, eventually, one of his sons.**

**But Jacob's previous acts of deception continue to result in envy, rivalry, and contempt within his family. He lavishes preferential treatment on his favorite wife's oldest son, Joseph, by giving him an expensive robe. Adding insult to injury, Joseph tells his jealous brothers about his dream where they all bow down to him. It's the last straw. Joseph's brothers try to murder him before selling him to slave traders, who drag Joseph down to Egypt in chains.**

**The brothers present Joseph's bloodied and tattered robe to their inconsolable father as proof of his death. Every generation of Abraham's family seems bent toward deception and chaos. How will God bring order and beauty out of this mess?**

**Today's video explains how these tragic episodes of human failure fit into the unified story that leads to Jesus. When we go back to the beginning of the story, we can better see how Jesus is the answer to a broken human family who continually struggles to be faithful covenant partners.**



FEBRUARY 2020 | DAY 12

# ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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## SCRIPTURE

**Genesis 38**  
**Genesis 39**  
**Genesis 40**  
**Psalms 12**

**Yesterday's reading ended on a cliffhanger, leaving the future of God's partnership with Jacob's family unclear. While the Bible tells one unified story, which you'll learn about in today's video, the story takes many unexpected twists and turns along the way.**

**Genesis 38, for example, feels like a strange interruption to the main storyline. The narrative cuts away from Joseph to focus on the story of Judah and Tamar. This account features the ancient cultural practice of levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5-10; Num. 27, 36), which required a man to marry the widow of his deceased brother. Children born through levirate marriage would receive the name and inheritance of the deceased man. This ancient practice protected the vulnerable widow from destitution and kept the deceased man's family line from dying off.**

**But the men of Judah's family refuse to uphold this practice for Tamar. Onan denies her a son, and then Judah denies her a husband, leaving her desperate and jeopardizing the future of Judah's family line. When Tamar realizes her father-in-law has deceived her, she uses counter-deception to save the family. Her intervention forces Judah to confront his failures and commend Tamar's righteousness.**

**Meanwhile, back in Egypt, Joseph's behavior is a refreshing contrast to his father's. Even in the face of danger and suffering, Joseph trusts God's wisdom and refuses to let fear drive his actions. Yet despite his faithfulness, Joseph still ends up in prison, feeling forgotten and alone. If God is with him, why is Joseph down in this pit?**



FEBRUARY 2020 | DAY 13

# ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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## SCRIPTURE

**Genesis 41**  
**Genesis 42**  
**Psalms 13**

**Joseph's long descent into slavery, exile, and imprisonment finally rebounds. Today's reading offers a brilliant example of how the biblical authors use narrative (one of the literary styles in today's video) to show how God is working in the world.**

**Joseph languishes in prison for two years, but at just the right time, God prompts the cupbearer to remember Joseph. This remembering leads to a cascade of events where Joseph becomes Pharaoh's right-hand man, the second most powerful person in Egypt. From prison pits to prominent palaces, God works out his plans.**

**There are lots of hyperlinks to the Eden story here. Just as God called Adam to rule the world with him as his image-bearer, now Pharaoh gives Joseph his signet ring and clothes, marking the former slave as an image of Pharaoh and co-ruler of Egypt. But where Adam chose to follow his own wisdom, Joseph trusts God's wisdom and spreads life, blessing, and abundance to all nations.**

**When famine reunites Joseph with his brothers, he conceals his identity and tests them by recreating the moment they betrayed him. They can go back to their father with sacks full of silver, leaving their brother in chains... or they can choose to rescue their sibling. Jacob, always playing favorites, would rather let Simeon rot in prison than risk losing Benjamin. Will Jacob's sons return for Simeon, or will they abandon another brother to Egypt?**



FEBRUARY 2020 | DAY 14

# ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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## SCRIPTURE

**Genesis 43**  
**Genesis 44**  
**Genesis 45**  
**Psalms 14**

**Judah's experience with Tamar changed him. Before, Judah offered his belongings as payment for sex with a prostitute. Now, he surrenders his own life as a down payment for his younger brother's safety. Judah's willing sacrifice rescues the family from starvation, convincing Jacob to allow his sons to return to Egypt with Benjamin.**

**But Joseph has one more test for his brothers. Once again, he recreates the moment they abandoned him 20 years ago to see how they'll respond. First, Joseph attempts to rouse their jealousy by favoring their youngest brother. Then, he provides an easy opportunity for his brothers to save themselves by abandoning Benjamin in Egypt. This time, the brothers refuse to take the money and run. Judah, the one responsible for selling Joseph into slavery, puts himself in harm's way to protect Benjamin. Overwhelmed by their change of heart, Joseph breaks down sobbing and reveals his true identity. Fearing retribution, the brothers shrink away from him, but Joseph pulls them into a tearful, loving embrace. The blessing God brings out of exile and suffering causes us to consider where else God has been at work in biblical stories of confusion and uncertainty. Watch today's video to learn how the Bible invites us into a lifetime of reading and reflection.**