


*For he looked forward to the city that  
has foundations, whose architect and  
builder is God.*

*Hebrews 11:10*

# The Living God

Trinity  
Mount Barker  
a Trinity Network Church



[www.trinitymountbarker.org.au](http://www.trinitymountbarker.org.au)

Genesis 12 - 50

HOLY TRINITY ADELAIDE  
INTEGRATED BIBLE STUDIES  
For Individuals & Small Groups



## How to get best value out of these studies...

Welcome to a new series of Old Testament studies in the book of Genesis. These Study Guides are designed in a three part format...

- 1 Opening questions to get you thinking are listed as **Appetisers**.
- 2 Those which get you to investigate the text are contained in the **Main Course**.
- 3 The **Take Away Value** section prompts you to reflect on what you've looked at and consider how it will change you and those in your group.

**If you're using these Guides in a Small Group**, it is vital that you have done preparatory work *before* you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

**If you're doing these studies individually**, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

If you're after good commentaries or resources to complement your looking into the bible, speak to your Small Group Leader or one of the staff, and we'll try to be as helpful as possible. Most people aren't going to spend lots of dollars on theological works, so we're constantly on the look out for good quality titles that will result in money well spent.

We trust you'll find the guides helpful, and we welcome any feedback you can give us as you use them.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with **prayer**, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Recommended Reading:**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| J. Baldwin,     | <i>Genesis 12-50 (Bible Speaks Today Commentary)</i> |
| G. Goldsworthy, | <i>According to Plan</i>                             |
| D. Kidner,      | <i>Genesis (Tyndale Commentary)</i>                  |

*(If I was forced to select one it would be the Baldwin commentary)*

archs in Genesis 12-50 as a presentation of the gospel to a neighbour or friend?

- 6 What perspective does Joseph give in response to the brothers in vv 19-20?
- 7 What does the response of vv 19-20 tell us about God's character in relation to the faltering and fumbling actions of the characters throughout our studies of Genesis?
- 8 At the conclusion of Genesis Joseph dies in Egypt. What do vv 24-25 tell us about the state of God's covenant promises? What aspects of the Genesis 12 commitment (see Study 1) have become a reality and what yet remains unfulfilled?

### Take Away Value...

- 9 Joseph's perspective on the events that have taken place seem very astute. How do they parallel for us the work of the cross (see also 1 Corinthians 1:22-31)?
- 10 Reflect back over the territory we have covered in the last five studies. What changes has it brought about in your daily living?
- 11 What confidence has the experience of seeing God faithful to his promises seemingly 'against the odds' given you?
- 12 How would you use the journeys and experiences of the patri-

# 1

## When God calls... Genesis 12:1-9

*The man Abram (later to become Abraham) is perhaps the most well known of all Old Testament characters. Yet his experiences seem to pale in their significance when compared to say, Noah or Moses. Was there anything about his life that would make it exceptional? The call of Abraham has long been championed as a call for Christians to follow the 'voice' of God in their own lives, or to set off on a 'spiritual journey' of discovery and personal awareness. How should we understand him?*

*A closer look at Abram's call reveals for us an ordinary man with ordinary (sinful) human weakness. He was not a 'nomad' as many have suggested, but a man who was chosen by God to participate in the promise of a new land and place of blessing for God's people. To do so he would have to leave the security and certainty of his homeland and live according to the promises of God. He would be called on to forsake all in order to serve the Lord. The account of his life (and those with him) would reflect a man who often wavered in his trust and confidence in God, preferring instead to take matters into his own hands. But despite seemingly insurmountable odds, God would make Abram's name great and through him all the nations of the world would be blessed.*

*The God 'who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist' (Romans 4:17) taught Abram and all succeeding generations to trust him to fulfil his word, despite all the adverse indications.*

### Appetisers...

- 1 When Christians speak about being called, what is it that they say they are usually being called to?
- 2 Read Genesis 11:1-9 and 12:1-9. What contrasts are there between the two accounts?

## Main Course...

### Read Genesis 12:1-9 again

- 3 What does God promise Abram in these verses? Break the promise down into its various elements.
  
- 4 The word 'bless' occurs 5 times in verses 2 and 3. What do you think it means to have God's blessing? How would this influence the way you behave?
  
- 5 How do the promises to Abram reflect a return to the good creation of Genesis 1-2?
  
- 6 When we look back we remember we were ejected from the garden (Genesis 3:24). But how do the promises to Abram look forward? What are they ultimately pointing to?
  
- 7 Read Hebrews 11:8-16. What additional information does the passage give us about Abraham's obedience to God's calling? *If you have time, consider the same question with reference to Romans 4.*
  
- 8 The promises to Abraham are confirmed in Genesis 15:1-18 in the form of a covenant. Contrast God's character with Abraham's. How are the promises explained and what would give Abram confidence to trust them?

## Appetisers...

- 1 How do most people speak of God's guidance today? Where is he usually guiding them and with what purpose?
  
- 2 How do you test if a person really has God's guidance? What criteria would you use?

## Main Course...

### Read Genesis 49:8-12

- 3 The tribe of Judah will have a distinctive role in the Old Testament history of God's people. What are the hopes outlined for them?
  
- 4 After blessing six of his other sons (vv 13-21), Joseph's blessing upon Joseph is outlined in considerable detail. What aspects of God's character are revealed in the blessing, and what confidence do they give the reader (see also Psalm 23; Isaiah 28:16; 40:11; Jeremiah 23:1-4; Zechariah 11:4-17)?

### Read Genesis 50:15-26

- 5 Assess the reaction of Joseph's brothers after their father's burial and the steps they take to save themselves. What does this reveal about their character (compare with Genesis 37:12-34)?

God reveal himself today (see Hebrews 1:1-2)?

- 9 How would you respond to a person who came to you claiming they had a revelation from God concerning their life (or maybe your life)? Think what the godly and wise response might be?

## When God Guides...Genesis 49:29-50:26

*The great truths introduced to Abraham are reaffirmed and developed with each generation. The process continues with Joseph through to the conclusion of the book of Genesis (and Joseph's life).*

*Joseph's journey is a remarkable one. When he is seventeen his brothers sell him, because of envy, to Ishmaelite traders. These in turn sell him to officials in Egypt. At the age of 38 (after some difficult encounters with Egyptian law) he is given a high administrative office in Egypt. When his brothers come to Egypt to buy grain on account of a severe famine in Canaan, Joseph eventually makes himself known to them and they are all reconciled. Finally, the brothers are persuaded to bring Jacob and their households to settle in Egypt.*

*At the end of the narrative Joseph gives an insightful assessment of all that has taken place (Genesis 50:20). It is worthy of study and reflection and reveals a godly response to a lifetime's experience that may well have prompted a different evaluation had we found ourselves in Joseph's shoes.*

*At the end of Genesis there are some unanswered questions. According to everything we have learnt about the covenant, Egypt is not the right place for the people of God to be. They were not meant to be servants of an alien king in a foreign land. We discover how this situation is addressed in the book of Exodus.*

*Further into the future the blessing outlined in Genesis 49:10 reaches its fulfilment with the coming of the Messiah, whose circumstances God will also guide and direct, and through whom the blessings promised to Abraham are made available to all the nations. In Christ we see clearly where God is taking his people, and how he guides them until they reach the promised land (Hebrews 12:22-24), which was always going to be much more than Canaan could offer.*

5

## Take Away Value...

- 9 Think again about the question of calling. How would you summarise Abram's calling? What aspects of the calling relate to us as God's people (as Abram's descendants – Romans 4:13-25)?
- 10 What are the benefits of trusting God and his promises? How would you encourage someone struggling to do so?

2

## When God judges... Genesis 19:1-29

*The picture of God as judge is one that most people in our contemporary culture are not too comfortable with. A loving God is much easier to contend with and easier to 'domesticate' into our own lifestyle. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah gives us a very real picture of the God of justice and mercy. Unless we understand both aspects of his character we will never understand his purposes.*

*Abraham's naïve nephew Lot is the reason for the remarkable exchange between the Lord and Abraham in Genesis 18, where the display of God's mercy to the righteous is on view. The biblical picture is constant: salvation is achieved in the midst of judgment. Lot is the picture of a man seduced by the world around him, such that his judgments become clouded and confused. In the end, it is only the direct intervention of God that will save him, and even then some of his own family refuse to heed God's word of judgment and the opportunity of salvation.*

*The concern for justice; the judgment that must come upon sinful human beings; and the possibility of salvation is addressed fully and finally in the cross of Christ. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah remind us that we cannot ignore the living God of heaven and earth and expect that he will not care. He is entirely consistent in his demand that sin not go unpunished, yet utterly gracious in allowing those who repent and flee from the consuming ways of this world to receive forgiveness and salvation. The bible will repeat this theme throughout its entire story line from the garden to the city.*

### Appetisers...

- 1 What opinions do Australians have of Jesus?
- 2 What opinions do Australians have of God's judgment? Are the responses to questions 1 & 2 related?

### Main Course...

**In order to understand Genesis 19 we need to read Genesis 18. Take time to do so before answering these questions.**

- 3 Why does the Lord decide to tell Abraham about his decision to destroy Sodom & Gomorrah (18:16-19)? What does this tell you about his character?
- 4 Abraham's exchange with the Lord in 18:22-33 is intriguing. What does Abraham *already know* concerning God's character, and what *does he learn* from the interchange?

### Read Genesis 19

- 5 Here we get a close look at the people in Sodom. How do their actions help us to understand why they were under God's judgment?
- 6 What kind of person does Lot appear to be at this point? What effects do life in Sodom seem to have had on him and his family?

tery. What are the certainties we can glean from the event?

- 4 The event has been described as a kind of 'conversion experience' for Jacob. What did he learn from it that would have changed him?

### Read Genesis 35:1-4

- 5 God appears to Jacob once again. What does the passage tell us about the state of his household and the cost of commitment in following the Lord's directive?
- 6 Jacob receives a blessing in v 9 of chapter 35. List the content of the blessing and parallel them with Jacob's dream in 28:13-15. Are there any new dimensions to the promises thirty years after they were initially made?
- 7 What purpose does God have in continually revealing himself to chosen servants in Genesis?

### Take Away Value...

- 8 The unusual accounts of Jacob's life and God's continual revelations could lead us to draw many conclusions if we do not approach the bible bearing in mind the author's intention. How does

## 4

**Despite the extraordinary events of the preceding chapters the revelation of God to Jacob in chapter 35 confirms that God's promises are entirely on track. If anything, this chapter suggests that Jacob is a changed man. The unusual 'wrestle' (32:22ff) was probably some kind of conversion experience. He is no longer the cunning deceiver, but the godly patriarch.**

**Jacob is confirmed as the inheritor of the promises made to Abraham and Isaac, and as such he takes his place in the line of servants through whom God has chosen to specifically reveal himself.**

**Whilst we may wish we were able to have such 'Jacob' experiences and direct revelation ourselves, the scriptures clearly tell us that we are in a better position than Jacob or his descendants could ever be (Hebrews 1:1-2). What needs to be known has been revealed, and is sufficient for us to live by. If anything, God's people need to hear the call to return to his word and discover the extent to which he has shown himself. Our constant habit of looking elsewhere for the God who looks for us first has marked the decline of the church in recent decades.**

### Appetisers...

- 1 The last few decades have seen a rapid decline in church attendance and practising Christians in the Western world. What do you think has contributed to people abandoning their faith?
- 2 What do you think the church needs to do in response to this decline? Do you think denominations have helped or hindered our growth as the people of God?

### Main Course...

**Read Genesis 32:22-32**

- 3 This most unusual encounter involves a certain amount of mys-

- 7 Why were Lot's family rescued according to 19:29, and why do you think the writer is keen for us to know this?

### Take Away Value...

- 8 In this study we have observed God's concern for justice and how seriously he takes sin in our lives and in society. Yet Christianity has been described as "privately engaging but socially irrelevant." What might have contributed to this perception?
- 9 What correction does this statement need and how does understanding God's judgment help us to change the perception?

## 3

### When God Blesses... Genesis 27:1-40

**The account of Jacob and Esau is a vivid display of both the ineptness and deceptiveness of human nature. Esau's flippant regard for his own responsibilities as first-born for the sake of a full stomach are seized upon by his brother and mother in a trail of craftiness and collusion. The promises of God appear to be at risk and we are left wondering what hope remains for the household of God if it is in the hands of a family such as this.**

**Yet the reality of blessing from God remains ever present. In fact the measures taken to inherit them underline their value, and Isaac speaks of the extraordinary consequences of receiving them in Genesis 27:27-29. Amongst the bizarre events of these chapters, God remains ever faithful and committed and reinforces his promises through Jacob's dream in Genesis 28:12-17. The words in the dream concerning angels ascending and descending ultimately find their fulfilment in Jesus Christ, who brings the expectations of blessing in Jacob's dream to reality (John 3:13), and who opens the gate of heaven through his coming to earth. The Apostle Paul outlines the extent of these blessings in**

***Ephesians 1. Jacob could never have realised what his dream foreshadowed, yet our flippancy and apathy towards the real blessings that have been given us in Christ is an indictment on God's people given the cost involved to secure them.***

### **Appetisers...**

- 1 *Blessing* is not a word used much in our culture today. What do you think it means? Think about when you last heard it, and reflect on how it was used.
- 2 What words or attitudes have replaced the idea of blessing?

### **Main Course...**

**Read Genesis 25:12-34**

- 3 At this point how are we seeing the promises to Abraham being fulfilled?
- 4 What difficulties and tests of faith do Isaac and Rebekah encounter in 25:19-22? How are these addressed?
- 5 What significance is given to the births of Esau & Jacob (25:23)?
- 6 What does the incident in 25:29-34 reveal about the character of the two brothers? (*N.B. A birthright was a double portion of the inheri-*

*tance and future role as head of the family)*

- 7 What was the significance of the blessing, such that Rebekah and Jacob would collude to gain it at Esau's expense (see 27:27-29)? How was it related to the Abrahamic promises?
- 8 The family struggles associated with the granting of the blessing are recorded in some detail. Why do you think the author desires us to observe the characters so closely?
- 9 What does the story reveal about human ambition and God's sovereignty?

### **Take Away Value...**

- 10 How is God's grace illustrated in the lives of Jacob & Esau? Where are you aware it has been most significantly displayed in your life?
- 11 When are we most tempted to manipulate and control circumstances and people in our own lives? How does our understanding of God's grace and his blessings help us to relate to others?

### **When God Reveals... Genesis 35:1-15**