

## **January 8 — Ripple of Peace**

### **READ**

Genesis 25:1-11

1 Chronicles 1:28-34

Genesis 25: 21-23, “*...Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah ... Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ... But the two children struggled with each other in her womb. The Lord said to her, Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.’”*

### **THINK**

Conflict has existed since the beginning of time. It makes for a very stressful life to be in conflict with others. And, too many times, it's with those closest to us. Such is the case with Jacob and Esau, whose conflict began in the womb. As we look at the world in conflict around us, it can feel a bit hopeless that we'll ever experience peace.

Though we can't be responsible for the entire world, we can begin a ripple effect that begins with ourselves. Let's lay down our proverbial weapons, remember to put God at the center of our actions and conversations, and work to bring peace into our relationships. It's what we are called to do in Romans 12:18, “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” Let's begin a movement that could change the world. Peace!

### **PRAY**

Heavenly Father, Thank You for the peace that only You can bring. Help me to bring that peace into my relationships with others. Let this action become a ripple effect that impacts the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **January 9 — The Battle of the Beans**

### **READ**

Genesis 25:27-28:5

Genesis 25:30-31, "*He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom). Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."*"

Genesis 25:34, "*Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So, Esau despised his birthright.*"

### **THINK**

Can you imagine being so hungry that you'd trade your entire multi-billion-dollar inheritance for a meal? Sounds crazy, right? But that's exactly what happened to Esau.

Esau had been out hunting all day and came home empty-handed. He was famished, smelled bean stew, and wanted some. Jacob agreed, but his agreement came with a major caveat: Esau would have to give up his birthright as the firstborn son. Esau was so desperate to temporarily satisfy his hunger that he altered the entire course of his life for immediate gratification.

Imagine what Esau felt when he finished his dinner, only to be hit with the reality that he traded his future for a bowl of beans. Literally!

What is your bowl of beans? What are you trading your future for on the altar of the immediate? Addiction, pride, lust, popularity, self-importance? No temporary fix is worth losing the life of blessing God wants you to live.

### **PRAY**

'Heavenly Father, Help me see where I am choosing the immediate over the eternal, where I am fulfilling my own desires instead of living out Your best for my life. I choose to trust You and Your timing. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **January 10 — Ladder Moments**

### **READ**

Genesis 28:6-30:24

Genesis 28:12 -13, “*He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and He said: I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying.’”*

### **THINK**

Jacob was fleeing the wrath of his brother, Esau, after deceptively stealing his birthright. That night, Jacob had a dream. In it, he saw a ladder that connected heaven and earth, with angels going up and down the structure and God standing at the top.

Jacob's dream was significant because it was his first face-to-face encounter with God. Until this point, Jacob had been riding the coattails of his family's faith. But now, God confirmed that His covenant with Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, would continue with him. God also made it clear that He alone is sovereign. He runs the show. And despite Jacob's past mistakes, God's purposes would prevail.

Like Jacob, we'll have "ladder moments" where we'll have to answer some big questions. Who do we really trust to run the show? Do we truly believe in God's sovereign power? Are we really living to bring Him the glory He deserves?

### **PRAY**

Dear God, I acknowledge that You and You alone are sovereign, in control over every area of my life. I submit my daily affairs and plans to Your control. I trust You! In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **January 11 — The In-Between**

### **READ**

Genesis 30:25-31:55

Genesis 31:3 *"Then the Lord said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your father and grandfather and your relatives there, and I will be with you.'"*

### **THINK**

Have you ever been in the middle of a family drama? Drama was Jacob's middle name. He was often involved with big family issues involving trickery, jealousy, and money. But even these distractions did not derail God's plans for him.

When we think of Jacob, stories from his early life and his later life as a father often come to mind. Rarely do people remember the story from today's reading because it seems like an "in-between" story, a non-pivotal time in his life, but it wasn't. During this season, God was preparing and molding Jacob for the future. He was learning to hear God's voice and obey His commands.

Do you feel like you're stuck in an "in-between" moment of life? Though nothing big or life-changing may be happening to you right now, don't waste this season. Like Jacob, God is always with you. He wants to use this time to shape you into the person He created you to be!

### **PRAY**

Dear God, Thank You for the "in-between" seasons. Help me to trust Your plans and grow me into the person You made me to be! Amen.

## **January 12 — Peace in His Presence**

### **READ**

Genesis 37:1-38:30

Genesis 39:2, *"The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered..."*

### **THINK**

It can be difficult to find peace amid a global pandemic and ongoing political polarization, let alone the difficulties we face in our everyday lives. Problems can amass with crushing force, and it can be easy to become disheartened.

Joseph, too, faced unimaginable hardships. Betrayed by his family; stripped of his former life, possessions, and all that was familiar to him to be sold into slavery, he had more than enough reasons to languish or grow despondent. But Joseph prospered. Why? Because the Lord was with him. And he never forgot that fact.

Rather than focusing on the problem before us, we should instead look to the One who has the power to overcome. With the Lord, we find peace. With the Lord, we find prosperity. With the Lord, we find the courage to take each day one at a time and entrust all to His loving care.

### **PRAY**

Lord, I want to live each day with You. I surrender all my problems and worries to You. Thank You for Your faithfulness, for Your constancy amid trials. You are my source of hope! Amen.

# January 13 — What's in a Name?

## READ

Genesis 36:1-43

1 Chronicles 1:35-2:2

Genesis 36:1, *"This is the account of the descendants of Esau..."*

## THINK

You're probably feeling less than inspired by today's reading — all genealogy! And you might be thinking, "Why do I need to read through list after list of names I can't even pronounce?" Well, you're not alone! However, although it may seem unimportant to us, it is important to God. And, believe it or not, we can be inspired by these foreign names!

Genealogy is important for the following reasons:

- It shows us that God cares about history and the individual people and families who are a part of it.
- It proves biblical prophecy and helps confirm biblical reliability.
- It determines who could serve in certain roles and shows that God can use imperfect people for His purposes.
- And, most importantly, Jesus' genealogy is evidence that God has been working throughout all of history to provide a Savior for us.

An interesting fact is that biblical genealogy ends in the first chapter of the New Testament (Matthew 1). Why? Because once Jesus entered the scene, lived righteously, died sacrificially, and rose bodily, all who believe in Him can enter God's family. No matter our family of origin, every sinner is given the opportunity to turn towards Christ and leave their past behind. How great is that!

## PRAY

Thank You, Lord, for this reminder that every life is significant — even mine — and that You came because You loved each one of us enough to die for us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **January 14 — Precious Peace**

### **READ**

Genesis 32:1-35:27

Genesis 33:4, *"But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept."*

### **THINK**

The last time Isaac's twin sons were together, Esau was angrily plotting to kill his brother. Jacob, fearing for his life, had fled. Years passed and each of their households grew. But when Jacob heard that Esau was coming, he was filled with fear — not only for himself but also for his entire household.

Jacob sent gifts ahead hoping to soften the blow. And then, as his brother drew near, he humbled himself by bowing before him. Esau responded with acceptance as he ran to embrace his long-lost brother. The two brothers wept as communication was restored and reconciliation took place. Precious peace was found in the humility of one brother and the acceptance of the other.

Is there someone in your life with whom you need to reconcile a lost or broken relationship? If anyone comes to mind, don't hesitate to extend the precious peace that's yours in Christ!

### **PRAY**

Holy Father, I am grateful for the peace I have with You through Jesus Christ. Help me be a peacemaker, full of humility and forgiveness. Amen.