



“This is the Story...”

Written by Talashia Keim Yoder and Daniel Yoder. Artwork by Christa and Jonathan Reuel.
Song lyrics and music by Jonathan Reuel.

Week 4: A Family

Genesis 12-24

Intro Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WeBh0QcpGkA&list=PLiSifKtmhnBYndDKZqJJ2xS8wuUH7JJH3&index=6&t=0s>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them.

- **Key verses:** Genesis 12:1-2, Genesis 17:5

Tell the story: God called a family, Abram and Sarai, to be a blessing to all the earth. God asked them to leave everything they knew and to trust God’s leading and provision. They said yes, and began a big adventure. What follows is a story of a family of humans who love each other and love God, and who also miss the mark a lot. Sometimes they forget to trust God and make some bad choices, but God sticks with them. God makes a two-way covenant with them. They agree to stick with God, and God agrees to stick with them.

- Read Genesis 12:1-9. The Abraham and Sarah saga continues through Genesis 24, so you may want to read all of that - or choose a few chapters so you get a little taste of the story.
- Read page 25 in the *Shine On* story Bible.

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - This is the first story we hear of someone being called by God. There will be a lot more of these in the rest of this big story! If you’re interested in the ways God calls people, maybe you want to start keeping track of these stories.
 - Skim the story and see if you can count how many times Abram/Abraham builds an altar. What does his worship of God look like?
 - This story is full of strange little stories. Here are a few head-scratchers. Dig into them if you like. It’s also enough to read the stories and know that even “great” families like this one are messy.
 - Read Genesis 12:10-20 and Genesis 20.
 - Read Genesis 19:24-26.
 - Another major story in this saga is the story of Abraham almost sacrificing Isaac (Genesis 22). What is going on here? Why do you think this happened? Did God really ask Abraham to do this?
- **Background information:**
 - God blessing people and creation isn’t new to us by now! The Hebrew word used here in Genesis 12 is *barak*, and in its noun form *barakeh*. It literally means “to kneel down,” and

usually is used to imply one party honoring another. We think a lot about honoring God. Here we see that it's two-way. How does that feel to you?

- "Blessed" is a term we hear thrown around a lot in our culture. But God's blessing of Abram and Sarai is very different from the way the term gets used in today's world. They are not blessed for a prosperous or easy life. They are blessed *to be a blessing*. What does this even mean?
- This is the beginning of the "people of the covenant." As we will notice in coming weeks, sometimes they become exclusive. But in Genesis 12:3b, we see that God's intention is broad. "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Keep this original intention in mind as you continue to read the big story!
- Male circumcision is part of the covenant God makes with Abraham. It may seem like a very strange agreement to make! Why do you think this was what God asked of God's people?

**Hint: Dig around into the reasons doctors recommend circumcision to some patients today...

- **Conversation starters:**

- Abram and Sarai were unable to have children, yet God promised them that they would be parents of a great nation. They tried to take matters into their own hands in Genesis 16, resulting in Ishmael's birth. Then in Genesis 18, God reveals God's answer to their dilemma. And in Genesis 21, their son, Isaac, is finally born. What do you make of this long journey to fulfillment of a promise?
- The whole story of Hagar and Ishmael is a squirmy one. How can Abraham and Sarah, people of God, treat them this way? Notice that God provides for Hagar and Ishmael when they are oppressed.

Microsong: "A Family" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/L9CWIM9Sr9k>)

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth. And asked them to leave everything to trust this promise and this love. They said yes and made mistakes but God came back time and again, ahhhhhhhhhhh....

Sing the big song: (Listen: https://youtu.be/B1L9qmaOm_k)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.
Eve and Adam, they tried to hide.

The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God's love
written on skin and sky,

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh

'cause God loves every one of us, it's true, and God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!



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Week 5: To Take It Or To Be It

Genesis 25-33

Intro Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Ufxtmntv64&list=PLiSIfKtmhnBYNdDKZqJJ2xS8wuUH7JJH3&index=7&t=0s>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called Abraham and Sarah to be in a covenant relationship with God. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God kept God's promises to make them a blessing to the whole world.

- **Key verses:** Genesis 25:23, Genesis 27:41, Genesis 32:28, Genesis 33:4

Tell the story: Abraham and Sarah had a son named Isaac. He and his wife, Rebekah, had twin sons named Jacob and Esau. They did not get along well. Esau was Isaac's favorite, and Jacob was Rebekah's favorite. Jacob was born after Esau, so by custom would not receive as much inheritance or blessing. Esau "sold" his inheritance to Jacob for stew one day when he was hungry, and several years later, Jacob tricked Isaac (who was blind) into giving him the blessing before Isaac died. This messy family missed the mark a lot in how they treated each other, and the consequence was that Jacob and Esau were not able to live close to one another. Many years later, when they were old men, they met again and reconciled with each other. But even after they forgave each other, they went their separate ways. Through it all, God found ways to be in relationship with them and stuck with them.

- Read Genesis 25:19-34, Genesis 27:1-28:5, and Genesis 32-33
- Read page 34 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - There are recurring themes and recurring stories from the story of Abraham and Sarah to this story. Do some detective work to discover these. Why do you think these themes keep coming back?
 - More head-scratchers: If you read Genesis 12:10-20 and Genesis 20 for the Week 4 story, read Genesis 26:6-11 now. Talk about a family cycle!
 - Genesis 33:4 is deeply emotional. How are humans depicted differently here than in Genesis 1-11? What do you make of those differences? How does that affect the way we read these stories?
 - Notice the interesting ways God communicates with Jacob. Read Genesis 38:10-17 and Genesis 32:22-32.

- **Background information:**

- Before you are too hard on Rebekah for helping her son trick his father, consider the position of women in her society. She had little to no power, but if the son who identified with her was the son who inherited the power of the family, then she would be protected. Do some searches to learn about the rights of women in biblical times.
- There's a whole narrative we're skipping over here, of Jacob and his wives. Read that if you want a little window into a culture very different from our own.

- **Conversation starters:**

- What a mess. It's easy to see that this family had some serious communication problems. Name some of their dysfunctions. God stuck with them! Do you ever feel like a mess?
- This is the family, the covenant people, who God called to be a blessing to the whole earth. Are there places in this story that you see them being a blessing?
- Esau was a hunter and farmer, and Jacob preferred the quiet of the tents. Do you and your family members have some big differences like this? How do you avoid missing the mark when you deal with these differences? Can these differences make for stronger families?
- The story of Jacob and Esau's reconciliation is an intriguing one. It came a very long time after they fought. Do you think it was a full reconciliation? Was there any way it could have ended differently?
- Jacob wrestles with God. Consider that. We can wrestle with God. Do you ever wrestle with God?

Microsong: "To take it or to be it" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/OhJoZnJVpjE>)

Rebekah tricks Isaac, Jacob takes the birthright, Esau threatens murder, Jacob wrestles all night, Angels on a ladder bridging heaven and earth, brothers embrace after decades apart. It's all about the blessing, to take it or to be it, "God was in this place but I did not see it"

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/LmA8QfdphZM>)

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Eve and Adam, they tried to hide.

The world got violent and God replied with a mark and a flood and a rainbow sign, God's love written on skin and sky,

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh

A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing,

God loves every one of us, it's true, and God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!



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Week 6: Shepherds, Slaves and Jealous Sons

Genesis 37-47:12

Intro Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8qWKDn40BI&list=PLiSIfKtmhnBYNdDKZqJJ2xS8wuUH7JJH3&index=8&t=0s>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called Abraham and Sarah to be in a covenant relationship with God. God continued God's work with Isaac and Rebekah and with their sons Jacob and Esau, who quarreled a lot and eventually reconciled. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God kept God's promises to make them a blessing to the whole world.

- **Key verses:** Genesis 37:4, Genesis 39:2, Genesis 39:21, Genesis 41:38, Genesis 45:3-5

Tell the story: Jacob, often called "Israel," had many children. He had a favorite son, Joseph. Joseph had dreams that one day his brothers would bow down to him, and his brothers didn't like that very much. One day, they sold him to some slave traders. They lied to their father and told him that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. God stuck with Joseph as he was taken to Egypt and sold to a powerful man named Potiphar, who saw Joseph's abilities and put him in charge of the household. But when Joseph refused the advances of Potiphar's wife, she had him thrown in prison. Even in prison, God stuck with Joseph. His gifts were quickly noticed, including his knack for dream interpretation. One day, Pharaoh had a dream, and Joseph was brought before him to interpret it. Joseph foresaw years of plenty followed by years of famine. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of stocking up the surpluses of food so that the region could survive the coming famine. The famine also affected Joseph's family in Canaan, who eventually came to Egypt for food. God stuck with the family as they were brought before Joseph. Just like in his dreams, they bowed before him. He recognized them, but they didn't recognize him. After testing them to see if they had changed since the days when they sold him, he revealed to them who he was. Jacob and his whole family moved to Egypt and settled in the land of Goshen, and Joseph was reunited with them.

- Read Genesis 37:1-8, 18-28; Genesis 39:1-6, 19-23; Genesis 41:1-13, 25-40; Genesis 42:1-2, 6-8, 18-25; Genesis 43:11-13, 19-34; 44:1-5, 11-34; Genesis 45:1-14
- Read pages 37-39 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- This story is packed with emotion. Genesis 42:23-24, Genesis 43:26-31, Genesis 45:1-2, Genesis 45:14-15 - and more. The humans of this story are becoming more and more empathetic for us. Read this story and map its emotional curve.
- Notice the many times it looks like the story is going to end in despair for Joseph and for the rest of his family. And notice the refrain of God sticking with them. Maybe you want to track these highs and lows.

- Where does the family of God end up at the end of this story? Given what you know already about the Bible, why might this be an important set-up for what comes next?
- The Joseph narrative is really a saga, and it can be experienced through multiple perspectives. Choose one of the following or one you come up with, and read the story with that lens. Then have a conversation or do some journaling or doodling about how you experienced the story.
 - A gifted leader
 - Family conflict
 - God is with the prisoners
 - God's faithfulness
 - Reconciliation
 - Trust and distrust
 - Betrayal and healing
 - Dreams

Microsong: "Shepherds, slaves and jealous sons" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/ZkitYfyQXil>)

A favorite son of a favored wife becomes a slave when his siblings sell him. In Egypt he forgets his pain, the land is saved from famine. His mother gone, his father old, the blessing meant for everyone now blossoms in a family of shepherds, slaves and jealous sons

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/p4d2N-6SdA>)

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