



CENTERPOINT
CHURCH



A CENTERPOINT CHURCH
SERIES STUDY GUIDE
PART ONE (WEEKS 1 - 7)

MAY-AUGUST 2025

WEARECENTERPOINT.COM

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

INTRO

WEEK 1 - ABEL

WEEK 2 - ENOCH

WEEK 3 - NOAH

WEEK 4 - ABRAHAM (PART 1)

WEEK 5 - ABRAHAM (PART 2)

WEEK 6 - ISAAC

WEEK 7 - JACOB

INTRO

In the book of Hebrews chapter 11, the author lists individuals from Old Testament history. These figures were known by name throughout generations. They were famous and listed as such.

Today, people known for greatness are included in a thing called the Hall of Fame. This series is kind of like that, but with people from the Bible being celebrated for their trust in God. We call it the Hall of Faith.

WEEK 1

BY FAITH, ABEL

Hebrews 11:1-4

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. 2 This is what the ancients were commended for. 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. 4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.

Do we remember the story of Cain and Abel? It's in the book of Genesis. Genesis is the first book in the Bible and it is all about beginnings.

Genesis 4:2b-7

2b Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. 4 And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. 6 Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”

This is a little bit of a weird story. It's really early in the Bible and we have our first murder. A brother killing a brother. Cain kills Abel over this. Have you ever heard the saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" That comes from this story in the Bible.

What's the why for Cain's actions? It appears Cain is angry at Abel because God accepted his offering and rejected Cain's. While this is a serious overreaction to the situation, it still begs the question, why did God reject Cain's offering.

The answer is a bit subtle in the text.

Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil...

Abel brought the fat portions from the firstborn of his flock...

Did you catch the difference? First fruits versus some of the fruits. Abel brought the best portion of the first fruits. Cain brought some of the fruit of what had grown.

Part of the challenge here is that God hadn't told anyone yet that He expected an offering of the firstborn or of the first fruits. That wasn't the expectation, Abel just did it.

So Abel is celebrated in Hebrews 11 as our first entry into the Hall of Faith. His is a remarkable story of faith. He didn't know what the right way to be was, he just did what he thought would be good and he nailed it. The definition of faith we see at the beginning of this chapter is helpful for us: faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see.

The battle within is this: it's hard for us to believe in something we cannot see. We even have the advantage of Jesus having already been here once and can point to the promise of His second coming for our hope.

Abel, and the rest mentioned in this chapter of Scripture, didn't even have that information to go on. They were just trusting God because He is God.

DISCUSS:

What stands out for you from the passage above?

Does God's reaction to Cain and Abel's offerings seem fair to you? Why or why not?

As you consider the story of Cain and Abel, who do you identify most with? Why?

What do you think is the hardest Hall of Fame to get into? (Inducted as a member, not entry as a visitor)

WEEK 2

BY FAITH, ENOCH

Hebrews 11:5-6

5 By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: “He could not be found, because God had taken him away.” For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. 6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Do you know somebody, maybe from your hometown who is just an absolute legend but no one really knows anything about them? Everyone knows they are legendary and there is the one story that everyone knows, but it's vague with very few details.

Everyone also has a story that only they know and they aren't sure where they heard it from.

Enoch is kind of that guy. He's mentioned in the Bible just a few times. There is an ancient book called the Book of Enoch that is attributed to Enoch from Genesis. However, only a couple Jewish and a couple protestant traditions regard the book of Enoch as part of the canon (part of the Bible). Those congregations are all in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

But Jude, in our Bible, quotes Enoch so at the very least they had read the book of Enoch.

Enoch has something in common with only one other person to ever live, Elijah. Elijah was taken up by God in a whirlwind. Enoch just was no more, taken up by God, avoiding death.

In Genesis 5:24 Moses tells us:

Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.

Enoch had a unique relationship with God. If nothing else, that's pretty cool. The reality is, each of us has a unique relationship with God as He has a personal relationship with each one of us. But Enoch's experience is so unique it was worth noting in the Hall of Faith.

How unique was Enoch's relationship that he didn't have to experience death? He just hung out with God and then one day, God is like that's enough time here, come with me. And poof, he's gone. He just is no more.

Can you imagine a relationship with God that is that substantial? Maybe Enoch was living as close to sin free as one could at that time?

He didn't live nearly as long as the others in the generations around him. His son, Methuselah, lived the longest of anyone ever. But he still died.

What did walking faithfully with God look like before Jesus was on the scene?

DISCUSS:

What stands out for you from the passage above?

What does walking with God mean to you? If someone said you were walking with God, how would you describe that?

How would you describe the relationship you hope to have with God?

What is most important to you in a relationship with God?

What would you have to say no to in order to invest more time in what's important to you in your relationship with God?

Given the option, would you choose to end your time on earth like Enoch?

WEEK 3

BY FAITH, NOAH

Hebrews 11:7

7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.”

Everyone knows the story of Noah right? A boat, some rain, animals and a rainbow. That’s basically it right?

Genesis 6:5-22

5 The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. 6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. 7 So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” 8 But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. 9 This is the account of Noah and his family. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God. 10 Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. 11 Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. 12 God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. 13 So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. 14 So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. 15 This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.

16 Make a roof for it, leaving below the roof an opening one cubit high all around. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. 17 I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. 19 You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. 20 Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. 21 You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them. 22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him.”

The story of Noah and his ark has historically been shared as one of cartoony animals, rainbows and a smiling cartoon family. The reality of earth that precipitated this story was appalling. God regretted having created humans.

There was so much evil, God regretted His creation. That's an unbelievable situation. But Noah found favor in the Lord's eye. He was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time and he walked faithfully with God. Like Enoch, he walked faithfully with God.

God singled him out as who He would keep to start the next round of the human experiment. Again, the reason he was selected is because he walked faithfully with God.

God gave Noah a seemingly impossible task. Build a boat that will hold breeding pairs of all the animals God had created and your family. By hand. With very limited tools.

Have you ever seen the movie Evan Almighty? It's a more modern day depiction of what it would have been like to be Noah. Animals just showing up from everywhere with no explanation. A massive boat starts taking shape in a suburban neighborhood and Evan looks crazy.

We don't know what Noah's circumstances were during those final days before the flood, but you could imagine it wasn't pleasant. His neighbors may have been mocking him. They may have tried to stop him. They may have been making everything harder for him. We don't know.

What we do know is that God entrusted this project to Noah and Noah came through. It doesn't matter what the challenges were, Noah persisted and completed the task. That task wasn't just to build the boat, but to gather food for the humans and animals, load the animals, care for them on the boat, survive being stuck on a boat with thousands of animals and your whole family for a year. The only escape was cleaning the stalls.

Then after surviving all that, Noah had to set his family up to reestablish civilization on the earth. No small task for certain.

Noah showed tact, perseverance, persistence and compassion to be able to do all the things it took to complete the task God gave him.

And while Noah did some good things, he was far from perfect. His faith was commended to him and he walked with God. That was enough for him to make the hall of faith.

DISCUSS:

What is the most intriguing part of Noah's story for you? Why?

What part of Noah's experience would have been the most difficult for you? Why?

What stands out for you from the passage above?

WEEK 4

BY FAITH, ABRAHAM (PART ONE)

Hebrews 11:8-12

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. 12 And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Abraham is known as the father, the patriarchal figure for the people Israel. Their story started humanly with Abraham. He was highly revered by the people. His story makes up a big section of Scripture.

Genesis 12:1-8

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. 2 “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” 4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him.

Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran. 5 He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Harran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. 6 Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. 7 The Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him. 8 From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

Genesis 17:15-22

15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" 18 And Abraham said to God, "If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!" 19 Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. 21 But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year. 22 When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him."

The above are just a few of the verses in Genesis about Abraham's life and lineage.

The story of Abraham's walk with God is remarkable. It starts somewhat out of the blue. God was with Abraham's dad, but Terah ran out of runway so God asked Abraham to take up the journey of the people of God.

The journey started with sacrifice. No surprise. As we can see from our experiences with God. A lot of stories we've seen since Abraham, also ask for sacrifice.

Leave everyone you know and the place you are comfortable with and go to a place I'm going to show you. No destination was given before he left. He had to be on the way, before he was told where he was going. That takes faith. Could you imagine leaving for a long trip, we are talking a multiple day drive, without any destination in mind?

No, no-one would do that. In fact if we knew someone who did something like that, we would question their sanity.

God had a special relationship with Abraham. He was talking with him on the regular. Another big piece of Abraham's walk with God, was the focus on the future. God was clear, He had a future through Abraham. That didn't make sense to Abe, he couldn't see any future because they didn't yet have kids.

God made it clear He doesn't care what current circumstances are, that doesn't impact what He is capable of. His plans will not be foiled by the circumstances we find ourselves in.

God's plan is to create a people through Abraham and Sarah. When He tells the couple they are going to have offspring that will be as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore, they laughed at God.

Which might seem pretty rude, but Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, not prime child rearing ages to say the least. The relationship between God and Abraham is actually the third covenant between God and a human. Early in the book of Genesis we really get to see who God is and how He wants to relate. He makes promises and He keeps promises. He told them they would have innumerable offspring and so they will.

The main theme in the life of Abraham and Sarah is trusting God. They trusted God to leave their family and the home they knew and they trusted God to provide a child for them.

DISCUSS:

What stands out for you from the passage above?

How does one grow in trust of God? How have you grown in where and how much you trust God?

What's been the most challenging circumstance you have found yourself in recently?

How did that circumstance impact your trust of God? Are you through it?

How did God show up? Was He worthy of your trust?

WEEK 5

BY FAITH, ABRAHAM (PART TWO)

Hebrews 11:13-19

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them. 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” 19 Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking he did receive Isaac back from death.”

The key to a life walking with God is faith. The first verse of this chapter gives a definition of faith. Faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see. The people listed in the Hall of Faith were living by faith before they really even knew that was the requirement.

Not surprisingly in the book of Hebrews, the faith of Abraham is highlighted for us again. And this story is even more powerful than the first one.

Genesis 22:1-18

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!”
“Here I am,” he replied. 2 Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” 3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.” 6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” 8 Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. 9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. 12 “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The Lord Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided.” 15 The angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, “I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

You have maybe heard this story before. It’s such a powerful story and maybe even unbelievable that it’s possible to have happened. Often with Bible stories we look for ourselves in the story or we try to place ourselves in the shoes of the main characters.

In this story, we don’t want to be in Abraham or Isaac’s shoes. Both feel like terrible options. Would you rather be the dad who’s asked to sacrifice your one and only son? The son that took a miracle of God to get. Take that son and sacrifice him to God.

Or would you rather be the teenage son who could recognize what was going on and notice that they didn’t have the sacrifice needed for what his dad said they were doing? Isaac asks his Dad what is going on, but he trusts that Dad has it figured out. And Abraham has huge faith in God. He had a right to because he had seen God show up in huge ways already. Abraham’s answer of God will provide the sacrifice was true for Abraham no matter what happened.

Even if a replacement wasn't offered, God had provided Isaac so Abraham's answer is true. Hebrews tells us that Abraham believed that God could raise the dead if that needed to happen. He had total faith in God for all things. How could you choose? We don’t want either option.

How do you develop a faith able to withstand a situation like that? How can you walk with you child through something like that? That had to be a tough day for Isaac to say the least.

Abraham's trust in God could have been very attractive to Isaac, but that would have been hard to focus on, being an instrument in the living out of this faith.

Thankfully God showed up audibly and practically to provide a suitable sacrifice replacement.

This story is such a beautiful picture of the future provision of a sacrifice that God does through Jesus.

DISCUSS:

What stands out for you from the passage above?

How would you respond if God asked the same of you?

What is the most valuable thing to you, you would be willing to sacrifice for God?

What's the hardest thing God has ever asked you to do? How did you respond? As best you can tell what was the result?

WEEK 6

BY FAITH, ISAAC

Hebrews 11:20

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.

Leaning into the theme of there are no perfect people we have the story of Jacob and his interactions with his brother and father. Jacob, who's name means "supplanter". He was born as the second born of twin boys.

That means that the birthright blessing should go to his brother who was born a few seconds before him. On the way out of the womb, Jacob grabbed his brother Esau's heel, in kind of a not so fast my friend type of move.

Jacob was his mother's favorite, but his father loved Esau. That sets up the story below.

Genesis 27

When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." Here I am," he answered. 2 Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. 3 Now then, get your equipment—your quiver and bow—and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. 4 Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die." 5 Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back,

6 Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 7 ‘Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.’ 8 Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: 9 Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. 10 Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies.” 11 Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man while I have smooth skin. 12 What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.” 13 His mother said to him, “My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.” 14 So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. 15 Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. 16 She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. 17 Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made. 18 He went to his father and said, “My father.” “Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it?” 19 Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.” 20 Isaac asked his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?” “The Lord your God gave me success,” he replied. 21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not.” 22 Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” 23 He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he proceeded to bless him. 24 “Are you really my son Esau?” he asked. “I am,” he replied. 25 Then he said, “My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.”

Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. 26 Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come here, my son, and kiss me.” 27 So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. 28 May God give you heaven’s dew and earth’s richness— an abundance of grain and new wine. 29 May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.” 30 After Isaac finished blessing him, and Jacob had scarcely left his father’s presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. 31 He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, “My father, please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing.” 32 His father Isaac asked him, “Who are you?” “I am your son,” he answered, “your firstborn, Esau.” 33 Isaac trembled violently and said, “Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him—and indeed he will be blessed!” 34 When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me— me too, my father!” 35 But he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.” 36 Esau said, “Isn’t he rightly named Jacob[a]? This is the second time he has taken advantage of me: He took my birthright, and now he’s taken my blessing!” Then he asked, “Haven’t you reserved any blessing for me?” 37 Isaac answered Esau, “I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?” 38 Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!” Then Esau wept aloud. 39 His father Isaac answered him, “Your dwelling will be away from the earth’s richness, away from the dew of heaven above. 40 You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck.”

41 Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” 42 When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is planning to avenge himself by killing you. 43 Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Harran. 44 Stay with him for a while until your brother’s fury subsides. 45 When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I’ll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day.

No, no-one would do that. In fact, if we knew someone who did something like that, we would question their sanity.

God had a special relationship with Abraham. He was talking with Isaac, did the best he could given the situation he was in. He was blind and his wife and son were trying to trick him and it worked. Isaac inadvertently gave the birthright blessing to Jacob instead of Esau.

Earlier in their lives together Esau hadn’t valued the birthright blessing and he “sold” his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew. Jacob was a conniver. But despite his character defects and downfalls, God used him for His glory. He built a people from this imperfect person.

There is a lot of God news in this story. God uses imperfect people to further His kingdom because that’s the only option. There aren’t perfect people, so imperfect will have to do.

Isaac completed his patriarchal duties by bestowing the blessing of the firstborn on his son. And this blessing carried with it more power than most as the promise of God to build a nation resided with the blessing Isaac passed on to Jacob.

Isaac is being celebrated in this Hall of Faith even though he really didn't do anything too remarkable. He basically just carried the water of the promise God gave to his father Abraham, to his son Jacob, from whom the promise would be established.

Do we strive to be important? Do we strive to be used in a huge way by God? We don't have to. Isaac is a perfect example for us. He did the job he was given by God. Nothing more, nothing less.

God blessed Him all along the way. Growing his flocks and other riches. Isaac's role was to obey what God had told him to do.

That was enough for Isaac. Is that enough for you?

DISCUSS:

What stands out for you from the passage above?

How does this story of Isaac blessing his son make you feel? Why?

Which character in the story do you identify most with?

Do you think Isaac is worthy of a spot in the Hall of Faith? Why or why not?

WEEK 7

BY FAITH, JACOB

We have seen birthright issues throughout Hebrews 11. We even saw it play last week, when Jacob received his brother Esau's blessing from their father, Isaac.

Greed, deception, and all forms of malfeasance took place. Jacob, which means supplanter – or deceiver – was given something that was not rightfully his.

We love the Scripture you are about to read for a couple of reasons. As you read it, ask the Lord to open your eyes to why.

Hebrews 11:21 – By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

Manasseh and Ephraim

Genesis 48:1:22 – 1 Sometime later Joseph was told, “Your father is ill.” So, he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him. 2 When Jacob was told, “Your son Joseph has come to you,” Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed. 3 Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me 4 and said to me, ‘I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.’ 5 “Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine.

6 Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers. 7 As I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So, I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath” (that is, Bethlehem). 8 When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, “Who are these?” 9 “They are the sons God has given me here,” Joseph said to his father. Then Israel said, “Bring them to me so I may bless them.” 10 Now Israel’s eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. So, Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them. 11 Israel said to Joseph, “I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too.” 12 Then Joseph removed them from Israel’s knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. 13 And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel’s left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel’s right hand and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim’s head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh’s head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. 15 Then he blessed Joseph and said, “May the God before whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, 16 the Angel who has delivered me from all harm —may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly on the earth.” 17 When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim’s head he was displeased; so, he took hold of his father’s hand to move it from Ephraim’s head to Manasseh’s head. 18 Joseph said to him, “No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.” 19 But his father refused and said, “I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations.”

20 He blessed them that day and said, “In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: ‘May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.’” So, he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. 21 Then Israel said to Joseph, “I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers. 22 And to you I give one more ridge of land than to your brothers, the ridge I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow.”

Manasseh and Ephraim were brought for their blessing from their grandfather. I wonder if they had even been told the story of how Jacob had stolen his brother Esau’s birthright?

A couple of things stand out that offer us hope. First, despite all he had done, the Lord still appeared to Jacob at Luz and blessed him, promising to make him fruitful, to increase his numbers, and to give him land to raise a family. No matter what you have done, when God has chosen you, God will bless you.

Finally, all the way back in Genesis 48, Jesus is prefigured. With the boys standing in front of their grandfather, Jacob put his left hand on Manasseh’s head and crossed his right arm over his left to place his right hand on Ephraim’s head. In the words of Warren Wiersbe, the cross that Christ bore is brought into the light. “It is through the cross that God crucified the old nature and now sets aside the natural that He might establish the spiritual. When you are born again, God rearranges your spiritual “birth order.”

DISCUSS:

What stands out to you from the passage above?

Are you aware that you have been blessed by God? How do you make sense of that blessing, given the fact that sin has been part of your story?

Do you have questions for God? Is there anything keeping you from asking your questions?

What comes to mind when you think of the cross? Have you been born again? Are you ready to have your spiritual birth order rearranged?

Who do you need to tell about your new birth?