

**EAST OF EDEN**

## **East of Eden: A Lenten Devotional**

**Copyright Redeemer Christian Church  
All Rights Reserved**

**Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), copyright 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.**

**Redeemer Christian Church  
3701 Soncy Rd  
Amarillo, TX 79119**

**[www.redeemerchristianchurch.com](http://www.redeemerchristianchurch.com)**

**Contributors: Austin Gravley, Seth Wieck, Karen Coleman, Jacob Cates  
Cover Art: Joshua Davis  
Edited by: Sherry Russ**

## How to Use This Devotional

The Lenten season is designed to be a season of somber reflection. We reflect on our sin against God and others through the things we've done and the things we have left undone.<sup>1</sup> We reflect on our mortality because sin is inextricably tied to death (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23). But because Christianity is not a religion that ends in bad news, but instead, is a declaration of Good News, we reflect on the hope we find at the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We have organized this devotional along the historical relationship of God with his people as detailed in the book of Genesis. We will see staggering and heart-breaking examples of their sin and mortality and will remind ourselves that in our nature, we are no different. The historical figures we see will try to find saviors to rescue them who are not God, yet we are also looking for the hints of the Good News that God was giving to his people. There would be a Savior from God, who would trample Satan (Gen 3:15), who would weather God's wrath against sin for us (Gen 8:21), and who would reunite God and man in their proper relationship (Gen 17:7). That Savior, Jesus Christ, must come from God.

Starting on Ash Wednesday, the beginning of the Lenten season, read the weekly devotional. Then, throughout the week, read the recommended Scriptures alone or with others and use the questions provided as a prompt to honestly weigh your own rebellion against God, think about your mortality, and finally, find hope in no person but Christ. When possible, we have attempted to include readings from the lives of the Patriarchs, as they are sometimes called, but also readings from the New Testament that interpret their lives in light of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

We have also included small ideas for practicing Lenten reflections with children. Feel free to let your children enjoy Lent as they learn about Adam and Abraham, Noah and Joseph, and ultimately Jesus! Our recommendations are not meant to be limiting. If your child loves to draw, let him draw a picture of the Flood. If she is more drawn to play acting, let her act out the Garden scene. Maybe your kids are musical. Let them belt out "Father Abraham" that week! Even though these stories are weighty, children can learn and grow alongside their parents if we allow them to have fun and learn in the way God has uniquely made them.

We will end with the crucifixion on Good Friday and the Resurrection on Easter, as these are the turning points of history. These acts of Jesus make sense of all that has gone before and that which will come after (Luke 24:27) and is the divinely appointed plan for our salvation (Acts 2:23).

---

<sup>1</sup> The Episcopal Church, [\*The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church\*](#) (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 2007), 320.

One final word: many Christian traditions practice fasting during Lent. Believers give up a small part of their lives to help them focus on their relationship with God during this season. Fasting is not a sanctified diet but should be the easing of a distraction from the life of the believer to clear out space for prayer, for reflection, for family, and for Christian community, to grow closer to God. Don't give up sugar because you want to lose a few pounds before Easter; give it up if eating sugar is how you seek the comfort only God can give you. Don't give up TV because you want to read a few more books; give it up because binge-watching Netflix distracts you from prayer.

May this Lent season be one that sees you and your family or Community find their Savior in Jesus Christ, our one comfort in life and death.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Heidelberg Catechism, [Heidelberg Catechism](#), Revised Edition. (Cleveland, OH: Central Publishing House, 1907), 19.

## Ash Wednesday

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—” therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:22-24

## The Fall

Genesis starts with the creation of the world at the very word of God. God, the eternal, self-sufficient being, needed nothing from his creation; nevertheless, out of nothing he made the world. He made light and dark, night and day. He made solid ground and waves that crashed upon the shore and hid wondrous creatures and caverns under their unfathomable depth. He made beasts that crept on the ground and birds that soared up into the atmosphere which enveloped the earth. And all of this creation of God’s was perfect.

But by itself, none of his creation completed its purpose; to image God’s glory back to himself. For that purpose, God created a special being that he called *Adam* or Man. Adam, the very first man, was not just created; he was formed from the dust of the earth, breathed to life by God, and placed in the middle of a lush garden in the middle of God’s creation to work it and keep it.<sup>3</sup> In other words, he was to make sure that the world reached its full potential by cultivating the garden and was to protect the garden “so that the fruit of past cultivating was kept safe.” Adam was God’s representative in God’s creation. By God, Adam was given a woman to be his wife and help-meet, because it was not good for him to be alone (Gen 2:18). God’s world was very good.

Unfortunately, what followed wrecked God’s good world. One day, a Serpent came to the woman. This Serpent was not just any garden variety snake but was an interloper, an invader into the garden. He came with a mouth full of lies. He attacked first the man and the woman’s trust in God, asking if he really commanded them not to eat from a certain tree in the garden. Then, he called God a liar and said that instead of killing them, as God had promised, eating the tree would make the man and the woman “like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5). So, the couple ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, subverting God’s authority and refusing, in effect, to be God’s representatives in creation. They attempted to place themselves on God’s throne.

---

<sup>3</sup> Richard D. Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men* (Sanford, Florida: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2016), 16-21.

The result was their eventual deaths (and the ticking clock on every one of their descendants (Romans 5:12)). The man and the woman experienced shame and cast blame on one another. The ground which had yielded its fruit so easily before would now resist mankind's attempts to cultivate it. The blessing of fruitfulness and multiplication God had spoken over the man and woman, became painful and full of heartbreak. Yet God had never planned to allow his creation to remain broken. He revealed to Adam and his wife Eve that someday, Someone would be born who would do what Adam should have done: crush the serpent. But that Someone would suffer in the process, having his heel bruised. The New Testament tells us that Jesus' suffering on the cross for us gives us back what we lost in the Garden; eternal life and righteousness standing before God (Romans 5:21). He restores our relationships to creation and with each other.

Lent is a season for active, intentional turning from sin, but that is only possible through Jesus' defeat of Satan, sin, and death at his cross. Each week as we explore another human being whose life was distorted by sin, we will also see that Jesus answers their situation in his life, death, and resurrection. He is the Savior their lives crave and cry out for, the Descendant promised and hoped for, the God who has not abandoned his creation.

## **Family Activities**

### **Touch**

Play Father or Mother May I. Refusing to believe, and not trusting and obeying God is the fundamental nature of sin. Our sin separates us from God. Going back to the start of the game is no fun. Or play Hide and Seek. God seeks us out even when we hide from him. For older kids, play Hang Man using keywords from the Bible story. After the word has been discovered talk, about how it fits into the story.

### **Taste**

Make a fruit salad. God gave Adam and Eve many good things to eat and only told them not to eat one thing.

### **Hear**

Sing "Your Word is a Lamp" and "Oh Be Careful."

Memorize this Catechism Question: Q: What effect did the sin of Adam have on you and all people? A: We are all born guilty and sinful.

Thursday

**Genesis 1:26-31**

Do you live as though you are created in the image of God? What areas of your life do not line up with God as your creator? What other humans' image-bearing are you tempted to downplay?

Friday

**Luke 4:1-12**

Jesus' temptation in the Wilderness stands in stark contrast to Adam and Eve's temptation in the Garden. Satan tries to tempt Jesus with comfort, power, and safety. In which of these areas might you be tempted with or is something else the inroad that Satan uses with you? Why do you think Jesus actively returns to Scripture to resist Satan?

Saturday

**Romans 5:12-17**

The Bible ties together sin and mortality, righteousness and life. But whose righteousness gives us life? Are you tempted to see yourself as the source of righteousness? How does knowing that Christ, who resisted the temptation of Satan and gives you *his* righteousness, change or challenge this temptation?

## First Sunday of Lent

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord." And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain, a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it." Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"<sup>4</sup>

Genesis 4:1-9

### Cain and Abel

What is the difference between Cain's sacrifice and Abel's? Surely, there is an argument to be made that Abel's required blood and Cain's merely grain. But God had not yet established a system for sacrifices. And even when He does in Leviticus, both grain and animals are considered pleasing to God. So, what did God regard in Abel's sacrifice that He did not find in Cain's?

We see Cain become angry, and immediately the LORD confronts him about his sin. So far in the story, we haven't *seen* Cain commit any sin. Making an offering to God wouldn't be considered a sin, would it? God must be seeing something that wouldn't be apparent to us. There must be something happening inside of Cain that God considers a sin.

The story *does allow us to see* Cain's sin—buried privately in his heart—erupting in violence. Cain murdered his brother in the field where he had harvested his offering to God, and Abel's blood spilled into the dust from which their father, Adam, had been formed.

Cain was the firstborn of Adam and Eve. He held the birthright. Through him, Eve expected God's promise of deliverance from sin—"he shall bruise the serpent's head" (Gen 3:15). In one fatal blow, Cain disqualified himself and murdered the next heir of God's promise. In Eve's mind, humanity's hope for deliverance ended there. What terrible sin crouched at

---

<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 4:1-9.

the door of Cain's heart? *Maybe it was the attitude with which Cain made his offering to the LORD.*

While Cain burned that grain on a stone altar east of Eden, his "private sin" had an exponential effect. As we consider Cain, we might look to another character who observed God's regard of offerings. When David slept with Bathsheba and then murdered her husband and several of his own soldiers to cover it up, God confronted him, too.

But David repents, and in Psalm 51 we have a record of his repentance. "Against you, *you only*, have I sinned." David realizes what Cain didn't: before his sin broke out against people, his heart first tried to land a blow against God. David requests, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." When David considers the sacrifice he should make to God, he sings:

"...you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it;  
you will not be pleased with a burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

Our offerings are not outward only but begin with a heart that is broken for our sins against God. When we pray, let's ask that God would show us our sins in a way that would break our hearts. And let's thank Him for Christ who is both the perfect sacrifice and the fulfillment of God's promise that eventually, the son of Eve would put an end to the serpent's lies.

## **Family Activities**

### **Touch**

Play the Opposite Game. How many opposites can your family name? Cain and Abel were both born with sinful hearts, but they were opposites in their giving of an offering to God.

Out of activity clay or craft paper, make some "gifts" that your family could give to God. Explain that while these gifts are important, God is more interested in our hearts. Say, "Let's look at our hearts and see if we're ready to give our gifts to God." Take a quiet moment, then say, "God, we've checked our hearts, and now we're ready to give you our gifts. You see our gifts, and you see our hearts. Thank you for taking care of our hearts. And thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus."

### **Taste**

Find a recipe for and prepare Vegetable Beef Stew and Heart Shaped Sugar Cookies. Family members prepare something to cheerfully place in the stew. God is most concerned with your heart, and He always knows the motives of your heart.

## **Hear**

Sing “I Have the Joy.....In My Heart” and “Change My Heart Oh God”

Memorize this Catechism Question: Q: Can anyone go to heaven with this sinful nature? A: No. Our hearts must be changed before we can believe in Jesus and go to heaven.

Monday

### **Genesis 4:10-16**

Does Cain ever repent, or even admit, that he murdered his brother? The LORD warned Cain about the “sin crouching at the door” before he acted on it. Are there sins crouching at our door that we need to acknowledge? Further, have we committed sinful acts or said words that we need to recognize as the sins that they are?

How does Cain react when God tells him about the curse and consequence he has brought on himself? Do you feel like the curse is a just consequence of Cain's sin, or do you sympathize with Cain as feeling it is “greater than he can bear?”

Romans says that the “wages of sin is death,” both Cain's and ours. Would you rank your sins as great as Cain's? Romans also says that “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ.” Describe your response to that free gift.

Tuesday

### **Genesis 4:17-24**

Lamech establishes a law of vengeance for his family: his two wives and three sons who are each respective leaders of agriculture, industry, and the arts. Name a few ways that you see the world continuing to follow Lamech's law.

Think of some times that you may have responded like Lamech. We don't usually respond with Lamech's severity, but at the heart of his rule is to treat other people as objects of his wrath, or offenders of his ego. Have you carried a grudge in your intimate relationships; in your business relationships; even towards people who offend you from afar (such as the news)?

The story briefly announces the birth of Seth, the third son of Adam and Even. Through him, Luke later traces the line of Christ. What can we gather about God's unstoppable promise that he eventually end the evil of sin? What are some ways this can affect the way we live now, and hope for the future?

Wednesday

### **1 John 3:11-12**

It's unlikely that the early church had a murder problem in which members killed each other over trivial offenses. Rather John, following Jesus' lessons, is exposing heart-harbored hate as a kind of murder. According to this passage, what was the beginning seed of Cain's murderous act?

John was warning Christians about the hatred they might bear towards other Christians (their brothers in Christ). Are there people in your life, or even church, that you might describe as "hateful"? Or that you would call an "enemy"?

We're well-trained in the Bible Belt to avoid using the word "hate." We probably wouldn't use that word to describe our feelings towards other people, so check your actions. Do you find yourself wanting to gossip about someone who has hurt you? Or only use negative words to describe someone? Possibly, do you avoid being at the same place as someone, or even a group of people? Describe some times that Christ was able to reach out to people who hated Him.

Cain murdered his brother because Abel's deeds were righteous. Christ's deeds have made us righteous. How does Christ's righteousness make us able to love our brothers and sisters?

Thursday

### **1 John 3:13-15**

First, remember how God found Abel's sacrifice acceptable. Now remember how Cain's face fell and he became angry when God didn't regard his sacrifice. What was the difference in their hearts?

How does John suggest we could know if our hearts are more like Cain's, or more like Abel's and have passed out of death into life?

Friday

### **Hebrews 11:4**

As we discussed earlier this week, it wasn't necessarily the content of Abel's sacrifice that pleased God, but Abel's heart which was glad to offer the gift. How does Abel's example of faith, though he died, help us to imagine how our faith can affect people around us during this Lent season?

List a few ways that you can express a glad heart at the pleasing gift of Christ. Do these ways involve words or actions? Would your words and actions live on after you pass away?

**Saturday**

**Matthew 18:21**

**Luke 3:23-38**

In Luke's genealogy (Luke 3), he counts seventy-seven generations backward from Jesus to Adam. Christ became the perfect sacrifice, forgiving humanity all the way back to Adam. Where Lamech took Cain's revenge from sevenfold to seventy-sevenfold, Christ took forgiveness from seven times to seventy-seven through all the generations of humanity back to the fall.

If Christ can forgive and restore like that, can we who hope for our forgiveness in Christ begin to look at the grudges or bitterness or hatred that we bear towards other people? Describe some ways that radical forgiveness would look like in our lives. What about in our conflicted world?

## **Second Sunday of Lent**

These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth... Everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you.

Genesis 6:9-13; 17b-19

### **Noah**

In the early chapters of Genesis, we see God create the world and everything in it and declare it good, followed by sin coming into the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience. In Genesis 6, we see sin reach a peak level of corruption to the point the Lord regrets having made man and decides to "blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land" (Gen 6:7), except for a man named Noah, his family, and pairs upon pairs of animals. Per God's instructions, Noah builds a giant ark, enters it with his family and animals, and is saved from the coming flood that destroys everything the Lord had made. When the flood subsides, God makes a covenant with Noah never to destroy the earth again by a flood, and sends Noah and his family out to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth, just as he told Adam once before.

The story of Noah is a difficult story for many reasons, chiefly among them the fact that God's judgment on man is on full display. We see that the Lord treats our sin far more seriously than we do, and although the Lord promises that he will not destroy creation with another flood, the punishment for our sins is the same as the punishment for the sins of the people killed in the flood: death. But we also see, through God saving Noah and His family, that God intends to send a savior to rescue us from the greater judgment to come, and although the curse of Genesis 3 remains, the promise of Genesis 3 has come in Jesus Christ.

As we read through the story of Noah this week, let us meditate upon the severity of sin, and how the Lord once destroyed the world because of sin's corruption. At the same time, let us also meditate upon our own sin, and how the Lord provided an even better ark for His people in Jesus Christ, and

let us rejoice in the fact that although our bodies will see decay, we will dwell with our Savior forever!

## **Family Activities**

### **See**

Go for a walk or a drive and look for warning signs. What do the signs protect us from and why would it be dangerous to ignore them? There are always consequences for sin. With each red light you see, name a sin and with each green light an act of obedience.

### **Taste**

Prepare Blue Jello (the water) with Fruit Loops (rainbow) and Bananas (boats) mixed in.

Barbecue your favorite meat. Smell the aroma and read the Genesis 8:20.

### **Hear**

Sing the chorus of "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus."

Memorize this Catechism Question: Q: How, then, can you be saved? A: By the Lord Jesus Christ through the covenant of grace.

Monday

### **Genesis 6:8-22**

In God's eyes, the earth was corrupt to the core. He decided to make an end of all flesh. Do you believe God is harsh in doing this? Why or why not? Verse 9 describes Noah as being a "righteous man, blameless in his generation." How do you think Noah would have lived in the context of this deeply corrupt world? Although it must have been odd to the people watching him, Noah built the ark as God had commanded him. How is God calling you to be obedient, even if it seems odd in the world's eyes?

Tuesday

### **Genesis 7:1-16**

Does God intend to destroy all of creation except Noah and his family? Why does God call pairs of clean and unclean animals? What roles will they serve? How does Christ put an end to the need to offer up sacrifices to make atonement for sin?

Wednesday

**Genesis 7:17-24**

Some commentators believe that Noah labored more than 100 years on building the ark. What do you think his response was when he saw the flood finally come about? What was the reward for his obedience to God? The people of Noah's day must have thought he was crazy as he was building the ark. How do you think they felt when they finally saw that the judgment Noah was escaping was coming upon them? The ark brings salvation to Noah from the judgment of God. How does the ark prefigure the greater salvation to come in Jesus Christ? What do we need to be saved from?

Thursday

**Genesis 8:1-19**

Did Noah try to go out of the ark the first chance he had? What does God tell Noah to do as they're leaving the ark? Can you see any echoes of Genesis 1 and 2 in this scene?

Friday

**Genesis 8:20-9:6**

What is the first thing Noah does when he leaves the ark? What is God's response to Noah's sacrifice? Through his covenant with Noah, God confers blessings upon all mankind. What are those blessings? How do they compare to the blessing we receive in the New Covenant with Christ? What have we done to deserve these blessings?

Saturday

**Matthew 24:36-51**

How does Jesus compare His return to the coming of the flood? What brief parables does Christ tell to illustrate why we should be prepared for His return? How can we stay awake and be watchful for the return of the Lord?

## Third Sunday of Lent

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:1-6

### Abraham

Noah's descendants repopulated the world, having children and spreading across the face of the earth. One might be forgiven for thinking that God's justice toward sin would incentivize people to worship only the true God and to pursue righteousness, but the hearts of men were still sinful toward God. They sought power and prestige and to usurp God's throne (Gen 11:1-9). God was still not surprised by this, but out of the milieu of humanity, he called out one family to carry forward his covenant, a family that would be his own for his goal of bringing salvation to the world. God called out Abram son of Terah, a man who himself worshiped the pagan gods of his homeland (Joshua 24:2), and took him to Canaan to begin this family (Gen 15:1-6).

However, Abram and his wife Sarai reached old age without bearing any children. At Sarai's urging, Abram took matters into his own hands. Instead of waiting for the LORD's promise, he "listened to the voice of Sarai," much like Adam before him, and took Sarai's servant Hagar as a second wife. She bore a son named Ishmael. Unwittingly, Abram introduced chaos into his family, as Hagar showered contempt on her former mistress and Sarai reacted in anger and sought to cast Hagar into the wilderness. (She eventually would send Hagar and Ishmael out into the wilderness, but God provided for and protected them (Gen 21:8-21).) For all of this, one would expect God to look at Abram and his dysfunctional family and abandon them to seek out a better candidate for keeping covenant with God.

Instead, God re-upped and amplified his covenant with Abram, giving him a new name, "Abraham", which means "father of a great multitude" (Gen 17:5) and promising that despite being nearly one hundred years old with a similarly elderly wife, the couple would, in fact, have a son, Isaac (v. 19).

Abraham was sinful in his distrust of God. He, like Adam, took matters into his own hands and sought to secure God's promises apart from God's appointed means. Yet God demonstrated that his faithfulness is greater than

human faithlessness. He sheltered Ishmael, but he continued with his plan to secure a foothold for a better Savior than mankind thought possible. By allowing a 90-year-old woman to conceive Abraham's son, God was hinting at the miraculous birth of his Son through a virgin girl (Lk 1:34-35). God's plan of salvation wouldn't be derailed by the sin of Abraham, but Abraham's sin would highlight the inadequacy of humanly devised schemes to deliver ourselves from our sin or deliver to ourselves shadows of the covenant promises God has given us.

## **Family Activities**

### **See**

Pitch a tent in the backyard and read the Genesis 15:1-6, then spend time stargazing.

### **Touch**

Tell everyone to get into the car because you have a special place to take them. Do not reveal the location! Drive around for a bit stopping for a few seconds at a park, parking lot, etc. Tell everyone in the car to trust you, no complaining and no asking, "Are we there yet?" Your destination is your family's favorite fast food place! Order everyone a "blessing" and read the Genesis 15:1-6 while you have them captive in the car.

### **Taste**

Prepare a hospitality dinner, like Abraham and Sarah. Invite a family over for a dinner that everyone helped prepare. Read Genesis 18:1-15 before dinner.

### **Hear**

Sing "Father Abraham."

Memorize this catechism question: Q: How does God justify you? A: God forgives all my sins and accepts me as righteous through Christ.

Monday

## **Genesis 14:17-21**

Melchizedek (king of righteousness), who is king of Salem (peace), shared bread and wine with Abraham. Hebrews 7 says that Melchizedek is a shadow of Christ. What might Abraham's communion with Melchizedek say about our relationship with Christ? Abraham refuses to take anything from the king of Sodom, a wicked city. Are there times you exchange the gift of Christ's righteousness for sinful attitudes or actions?

Tuesday

**Genesis 15:1-21**

God made a covenant with Abraham and then took upon himself the curses by symbolically passing between the halves of the sacrifice. How might this shape your view of God? Do you ever view him as vindictive? How does God literally take the curse upon himself in history?

Wednesday

**Genesis 18:1-20**

Despite God's repeated promises to Sarah and Abraham that they will have a son, Sarah is still incredulous and laughs at God. Is the promise of salvation through Jesus' ever a hard thing to believe? Why or why not? What are you tempted to believe in your own life or sanctification is "too hard for the Lord"? Rather than wonder what is the appropriate response to those areas of your life?

Thursday

**Genesis 20:1-17**

Abraham is cowardly toward Abimelech at the expense of his wife. God is gracious to all parties involved by warning Abimelech of Abraham's duplicitousness. Why might God bailout Abraham and Sarah when Abraham has acted in a way that does not line up with the character of God? Has God ever "saved you from yourself"?

Friday

**Genesis 21:1-7**

God carries through with his promise to miraculously give Sarah and Abraham a son, just as he miraculously gave his Son Jesus through the virgin girl, Mary. Sarah disbelieved God often along the journey, yet God was still faithful. How do you struggle with disbelief toward God? Do you ever find yourself laughing with joy mixed with humility, like Sarah?

Saturday

**Genesis 22:1-19**

God had given Isaac to Abraham, and by asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, God was doing two things: first, asking Abraham to consider if God or God's gifts were most important and second, proving the inadequacy of our "sacrifices." What would be hard to give over to God if he asked? What do you attempt to give to or do for God to make him pleased with you when he has already provided Jesus as our sacrifice?

## Fourth Sunday of Lent

The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

Genesis 21:1-7

### Isaac

God's promise to Abraham and Sarah is miraculous enough. Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old. Sarah laughed when she heard God promise that she would bear a son, even after the "way of women" had left her. Another time, Abraham had laughed, mentioning that Sarah was 90-years-old (Gen 17:17). The impossibilities of God's promise were hilarious.

Abraham's life had been marked by God's promises. He'd left the land of his ancestors on the promise of God. On at least one occasion, God had promised land to his unborn children. As we read these incredible stories, we sometimes forget that there is a whole world happening around Abraham and Sarah. Sure, their story of faith is beautiful, and we have much to learn from it. But even as God promises Abraham a son to bless the nations in Genesis 17, He's also on His way to destroy Sodom in Genesis 18. Beside Abraham and Sarah's story, there's a world needing the offspring of Abraham to be born.

If we remember back to the Garden of Eden, God made another promise about unborn children to Eve. One of her offspring would bruise the head of the evil serpent. When her son Cain rose up and killed Abel, Eve must have felt God's promises were laughable.

Nevertheless, God's promises continued past Babel and through Noah into the land of the Chaldeans; out of the land of Ur with the infertile Abram and Sarai, and delivered once more, this time in the crying bundle of Isaac. Against all odds, when we might laugh at the impossible promises of God, He delivers our salvation and causes us the laughter of joy when He gives us the impossible Son of God.

## **Family Activities**

### **See**

Look through family baby pictures identifying parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. While looking at the pictures ask the children to identify who the parents, grandparents, etc. are in the pictures. Talk about how old each person is and how older people have wrinkles, grey hair, glasses, canes, etc. Would it make your family laugh if the oldest couple in your family announced they were having a baby!? Would anyone in your family say, "That is impossible!" Abraham and Sarah both laughed at God when he told them they would be having a baby, they were ancient – close to 100! When that baby was born, they named him Isaac which means laughter.

### **Taste**

Prepare a picnic in your backyard. Use Abraham's Roast Beef, Sarah's Bread, Cheese, Milk, and Angel Food Cake. Read Genesis 18:1-15 together.

### **Hear**

Because God is a promise keeper sing to him the song "Praise Him Praise Him." Since we are the "children of the promise" sing to him "Jesus Loves Even Me."

Memorize this Catechism Question: Q: How were sinners saved before Christ came? A: By believing in the promised Messiah.

## **Monday**

### **Genesis 26:1-5**

What are the promises that God makes to Isaac? Are these promises similar to the promises that God made to Abraham? Why is it important that God reminds Isaac of the promise He'd made to Isaac's father? How do these promises find their fulfillment in Christ? How are these promises available to us in our day?

## **Tuesday**

### **Genesis 26:6-11**

Why does Isaac lie to Abimelech about Rebekah? How is this similar to the lie that Abraham told Abimelech earlier in Genesis? Why would it be significant that Isaac lied in a similar way to his own father? Some of our sinful habits come to us from our parents. Are God's promises available even for those sins? How does Christ offer salvation even from Isaac's family sin? How might Christ offer salvation even from our family sins?

Wednesday

**Genesis 2:23-3:6**

What does it say about God's character that He hears and responds to the Israelites groaning? Why is God's response to remembering the promises he'd made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? What is revealed about God's character when he identifies Himself as the God who promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Do we inherit God's promises through Christ?

Thursday

**Romans 9:6-9**

At this point in the week, it might be worth our time to reflect on how God's word has not failed at any point, despite some of the circumstances that seem insurmountable. How did God's word succeed for Eve? How did God's word succeed for Abraham? For Isaac? Christ is the fulfillment of Eve's, Abraham's, and Isaac's promises. The Gospel of John calls Christ the Word of God. How has God's word succeeded in Christ? How are we now considered to be "the children of the promise"? What does that mean for us living today?

Friday

**Galatians 4:28-5:1**

In Galatians Paul makes the point again that like Isaac, we are also children of the promise. How does being born again in Christ allow us to live as free sons and daughters? How does this new birth as a child of the promise allow us to "stand firm" and not submit again to a "yoke of slavery."

Saturday

**Hebrews 11:8-20**

What does it mean that Abraham and Isaac died in faith, "not having received the things promised"? When did they expect those promises to be fulfilled? Did God fulfill some promises for Abraham and Isaac? What does it mean that "Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau"? Since we are the "children of the promise," how have we seen some of God's promises come true in Christ? Having seen these promises in Christ, how does this help us look to our future where God has prepared us a "heavenly city"?

## **Fifth Sunday of Lent**

And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her,

"Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger."

When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. Afterward, his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Genesis 25:21-28

### **Jacob**

Apart from the birth of Jesus Christ, perhaps no other birth in Scripture is as dramatic and eventful as the birth of Jacob and his brother Esau. Even while they were in the womb, the Lord revealed to their mother that these boys had big futures in front of them! Only God knew that, as Jacob came out of the womb grabbing his brother's heel, this boy would play an important role in God's plan of salvation - but not before spending his life searching for God in his sin.

We first read about Jacob's antics in how he tricks his brother Esau into selling his birthright for a bowl of soup, which soon escalates into Jacob deceiving his father into receiving a blessing that was meant for Esau. Then, as Jacob is searching for a wife, his desire for Laban's younger daughter leads the deceiver to be deceived, and Jacob marries both Leah and Rachel as a result of Laban's trickery. As Jacob's family grows, so does his strife with Laban, and eventually, they must separate; but soon Jacob finds himself in strife with his brother once again. In all these instances and more, Jacob is searching for his Savior in seeking out prosperity, blessing, and personal fulfillment, but it's not until the Lord encounters Jacob and wrestles with him until daybreak that Jacob receives a new name and a new identity - one that he had been searching for all along.

As we read the story of Jacob, it is easy to recall how our pursuits of prosperity, blessing, and personal fulfillment have led to sin, just as Jacob does in his antics. But as we remember our sin, and the consequences

brought from it, we must not forget that we are reading the story of the man who would be renamed Israel, and from Israel's heritage would come Israel's Savior. We may still reap what we sow in the short term and long term consequences of our sin, but we have been delivered from the eternal consequences of our sin through the blood of the King of Israel!

## **Family Activities**

### **Touch**

Play any board game with one person secretly being deceitful, allowing them to win the game. At the end of the game, how do the other players feel?

Play the Barter Game. Have everyone bring their most favorite toy, stuffed animal, electronic device, etc. to the kitchen table. Prepare the family's favorite dessert and place in the middle of the table. Ask the question: "Would anyone like to trade their favorite item for some dessert?" Explain to them that this is the only way to have a bite of dessert. Talk about the fairness of this and ask if they had traded for a bite - would they be sad to leave the table without their favorite thing?

### **Taste**

Make your family's favorite soup or crockpot meal. The Barter Game works great here as well!

### **Hear**

Sing "Count Your Blessings."

Memorize this catechism question: Q: How did Christ fulfill the covenant of grace? A: Christ obeyed the whole law for his people, and then suffered the punishment due for their sins.

Monday

## **Genesis 25:19-34**

What does the Lord tell Rebekah about her twin boys? What events are foreshadowed in the life of these boys?

Esau trades the incredible blessing of being Isaac's first born son for one bowl of soup. Have there been moments where we've traded the blessings of Christ for some temporary pleasure?

Jacob takes advantage of Esau's moment of weakness and convinces Esau to sell his birthright. In what moments do you find yourself weak and tempted to sin?

How does the Gospel bring us good news when we've chosen our sin over Christ? What are his promises to us?

Tuesday

**Genesis 27:1-29**

How does Jacob deceive Isaac? What blessing does Isaac pronounce on Jacob? How does this blessing relate to what the Lord originally said about Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:23?

Wednesday

**Genesis 29:1-35**

Why did Jacob desire Rachel over Leah? Did this cause Jacob to act inappropriately towards Laban? Jacob had sown deception with his brother and father. What had he reaped from his uncle? How did the Lord comfort Leah in the fallout from Jacob and Laban's sin? What was her response?

Thursday

**Genesis 31:4-42**

Jacob and Laban's relationship has been marked with sin against each other since the beginning. Where has this trajectory taken them? Their families? Where can our sin lead us in the short term? The long-term? The eternal term? How does Christ save us from the eternal-term consequences of our sin? What sin do you need to repent of today?

Friday

**Genesis 32:22-32**

Was Jacob seeking an encounter with God? How did God transform Jacob as a result of this encounter? How does Jacob respond to this encounter with God?

Saturday

**Genesis 35:1-15**

What did God command Jacob and his family to do? What did God do to Jacob when he arrives at his destination? What promises does God make to Jacob? What role did Jacob play in the Savior Jesus' history?

## **Sixth Sunday of Lent**

So Joseph said to his brothers, “Come near to me, please.” And they came near. And he said, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God.

Genesis 45:4-8

### **Joseph**

One of the earliest effects of sin shown in the Book of Genesis is the murder of Abel at the hand of his brother Cain. Sin fractures families; it causes envy and jealousy; it brings strife and bloodshed. Even the family that God has called out is not immune to the damages of sibling rivalries as Jacob’s deception of Esau proved. This sibling rivalry didn’t end with Jacob and Esau, either. The damages of sin to families was a theme for Jacob’s own children.

Jacob ultimately had twelve sons with four women, two wives, and two concubines. We certainly don’t recommend building your family in this way! The eleventh son, Joseph was borne by Rachel, Jacob’s favorite wife. The favoritism was passed on to Joseph, a privilege which an immature Joseph was perhaps too quick to remind his brothers of. Much like Cain and Abel, hatred and contempt for Joseph welled up in his brothers’ hearts. They conspired to kill him, but a last-minute change of heart resulted not in Joseph’s murder, but in his being sold into slavery. He was transported to Egypt where he served first Potiphar, then, after being falsely accused of attempted rape served time. Joseph’s brothers had intended evil for him, and at first glance, they had succeeded. But the invisible hand of God was at work for Joseph’s good and the good of the whole family.

Joseph’s stint in prison ironically brought him closer to the Pharaoh, Egypt’s monarch, and God allowed him to interpret dreams to settle a criminal case centering on which of Pharaoh’s servants attempted to assassinate him (Gen 40) and further, Pharaoh’s dream predicting a famine (Gen 41). As a result, Joseph was allowed to manage preparations for the stockpiling and rationing of food for the whole kingdom, bringing him an unprecedented level of power, for an outsider, in Pharaoh’s court.

When the prophesied famine came to pass, it extended beyond Egypt’s borders and affected Joseph’s estranged family in Canaan. They did not know Joseph was now a high powered administrator in Pharaoh’s government, but they knew that Egypt had food, so they set out to purchase

enough to get their families through the famine. When they arrived, Joseph recognized his brothers, though he had aged enough that they no longer recognized him. Determined to know the well being of his father and his only full brother, Benjamin, he set out to test his brothers and used his authority to require his brothers to first bring Benjamin to Egypt. After they complied, Joseph requested his father's presence but demanded Benjamin be held as collateral. Seeing Judah, the brother who spearheaded the attempt on Joseph's life, which led to his life in slavery, beg to be exchanged for Benjamin so that the aged Jacob would not die after losing Benjamin, the only other son of Rachel, Joseph finally broke down, embracing his brothers and revealing his identity.

One would expect, like Joseph's brothers, that Joseph would be vindictive, ready to repay evil to his brothers, killing them or imprisoning them on falsified charges. They expected him to wipe out their family lines, but after their father died, Joseph reminded them that it was God's gracious providence that redeemed their sin to care for them. In Acts 2, Peter makes it abundantly clear to the crowd he is preaching to that they are responsible for the death of Jesus, but that God was ironically using their sinful murder of Jesus, who unlike Joseph, was, in fact, dead, and then restored to life, to redeem them (Acts 2:22-42; 37-39). Joseph was a foreshadow of the Savior God was going to send, a taste to God's people of his sovereign mercy, even in the middle of their sin.

## **Family Activities**

### **See**

Take some Field Trips that you can view from the car. Drive past a local prison, jail or juvenile detention center where you can see bars or barbed wire. Joseph was unfairly put in prison. Additionally, drive around the outside of town and find some grain elevators. Joseph stored up vast quantities of food.

Look up pictures of Egypt in an encyclopedia or on the Internet showing pyramids, sphinx, camel caravans, cisterns or water wells.

### **Taste**

Prepare a batch of Genesis 43:11 cookies: Mix  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup honey,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup peanut butter, 1 cup powdered milk,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup raisins,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sunflower seeds. Roll into balls. Then roll these balls in coconut or wheat germ.

### **Hear**

Listen to "Strong Enough" and "Forgiveness" by Matthew West.

Memorize this catechism question: Q: How does God sanctify you? A: God makes me more and more holy in heart and conduct.

Monday

**Genesis 37:2-11**

It is clear that Jacob had chosen a favorite son in Joseph. Why do you think he allowed his preference to bleed over and hurt his other children? How have you hurt others or been hurt by them in this way? How did Joseph make the situation worse? Do the sin of Jacob and the lack of sensitivity from Joseph toward his brothers excuse what the brothers ultimately do? Do you attempt to excuse your sin? How so?

Tuesday

**Genesis 37:12-36**

God providentially rescued Joseph from murder through Reuben's intervention. Who was instrumental in your knowing Jesus or introducing you to Christianity? Judah's idea is not worse than death but leads Joseph into a hard life. God has rescued you from sin, but did that automatically lead to an "easy" life? How does James 1:2-4 tell us to think about suffering?

Wednesday

**Genesis 39:1-23**

How easy would it have been for Joseph to sin and not be caught? How often do you justify doing things contrary to God's will with, "No one will know?" How often is the logic for not sinning in your life, "I might get caught?" Why does Joseph say he should not lie with Potiphar's wife (v. 9)? What is the contrast between the two approaches?

Thursday

**Genesis 40:1-22**

The short-term consequences of Joseph's obedience to God might have left him wondering why God had allowed prison to happen to him. Do you ever question God's work or justice in difficult situations? Joseph is unjustly imprisoned for his one act of obedience. Compare Joseph's situation to Jesus' execution for all of mankind's sinfulness. Had God left either situation or had he lost control?

Friday

**Genesis 41:1-39** (This is a long passage. If reading with children, you may read ahead and summarize the events).

Were any of the events that led Joseph to this point accidental? How was God's sovereign hand made clear in this passage? If so, how do you treat the events in your life as accidental? What has to change in your heart for events to be met as intentional opportunities from God?

Saturday

**Genesis 50:15-21, Acts 2:22-42; 37-39**

Read in conjunction these two passages that highlight how God is capable of using even human sinfulness for our ultimate good. What does that say about God's character? Looking back, has God ever used a difficult season caused by sin, yours or someone else's, in a redemptive way? How does this parallel show us that Jesus is the Savior that Joseph's life anticipated?

## **Good Friday**

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who was hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Luke 23:32-43

## **Crucifixion**

We don't know much about the two men being crucified with Jesus. We know that they were criminals. We know that they were guilty. And we know that only certain types of criminals were crucified. Some commentaries even say the most likely crime for which these men had been condemned was high treason. They each had tried to overthrow the highest king in the land: Caesar Tiberius.

Think back to Cain and Abel. Both men were offering sacrifices for their sins. Abel offered the sacrifice willingly and with a grateful heart, and God was pleased with the gift. Cain begrudgingly offered his gift and was not accepted. This drama runs through the course of humanity from Cain and Abel to the two convicts on the cross. Even through ourselves. Paul describes this conflict in Galatians: "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do." In some moments, this can feel overwhelming. I have the entire history of humanity's sin working against me. If Cain, one generation from the Garden of Eden couldn't be grateful to God? If the traitor on the cross, hanging next to Christ Himself, could only rail against God, then what good is there in me?

Fortunately, it isn't my goodness that saves me (or Abel, or the convict who feared God). Paul says again in Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now

live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” and “God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba! Father!’”

We were crucified with Christ, like the criminal who said, “Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom.” And we have the Spirit who calls God our Father; no longer our flesh who says he’s a hard master.

Both of the convicts died on their crosses that day. One awoke, even that day, in Paradise with Christ. As we reflect on the events of Good Friday, and as we endure the quiet darkness of Holy Saturday, let’s be grateful, too, that we have the taste of Paradise. Even now, the Spirit of Christ calls out in our hearts, “Abba! Father!”

## **Easter Sunday**

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

### **Luke 24:36-53**

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and everything that filled it. He created Adam and Eve and put them in the garden to work it and keep it, but they disobeyed the Lord and were sent away from the garden. Because of their sin, Adam and Eve would one day taste the sting of death, but the Lord did not send them away without hope. From Eve would come the one who would crush the head of the serpent that deceived them (Genesis 3:15), and until he came, the people of God - Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and many others - were looking forward to the coming of their Savior.

The long-awaited Messiah came and dwelt among us. He lived a sinless, blameless life that we could never live, but was crucified as a criminal on the cross - a death we all deserve. But, as we read in Luke 24, Jesus did not stay in the grave - the very curse that came upon Adam and Eve and all of humanity could not hold him down. Three days after his death, he rose from that grave, and he began to appear to those who followed him. The disciples were startled and frightened at first, but they soon realized that the man that they had spent three years following had just fulfilled the promise

that God made to Adam and Eve in the garden. The serpent's head was crushed!

Because Jesus has lived the life, we could not live, died the death that we deserved, and has been raised to everlasting life, by faith in Him we share in all of those accomplishments. His perfect life becomes our life. His death becomes our death. We will share in everlasting life with him. This Easter Sunday, rejoice in the resurrection of Christ and the salvation he brings to the people of God!