

**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

**DAY ONE**

Read Genesis 25:1-11

**NOTE:** Though mentioned here, Abraham's marriage to a "concubine," or wife of secondary rank, is not to be understood as happening chronologically after the events narrated in the preceding chapter. *NABRE*

1. As chapter 25 begins, the author deviated from the main story line to add that Abraham took another wife. Although Abraham was blessed with more sons and grandsons, he gave all he had to Isaac (verses 1-5). Why do you not find this surprising?

2. Abraham cared for the sons of his concubines, Hagar and Keturah, by giving them gifts while he was still living. In what way did he protect the interests of Isaac to ensure that Isaac continued as the uncontested son of the promise (verse 6)?

**NOTE:** Most of Keturah's six sons have never been satisfactorily identified. They are believed to have settled in Kedem, the region inhabited by the Easterners (Genesis 29:1) and become tribes in the Arabian desert of southern Palestine and northwestern Arabia. Only one, Midian, and his descendants, the Midianites, are mentioned later in the Old Testament (see Genesis 37:28; Exodus 2:15; 3:1).

3. When Abraham settled his affairs and provided for his sons, he was 175 years old (verse 7). Record the beautiful words that describe his death (verse 8).

Abraham breathed his last

an old man

and was gathered

**NOTE:** By saying that Abraham "was gathered to his people" (v.8), that is, to his ancestors, the text is referring in some way to life after death, although there is no suggestion yet that this is a point when one is rewarded or punished. The reward for Abraham's faithfulness mentioned here is his longevity and the fact that his sons are at his bedside when he dies--Isaac, who was living with him, and Ishmael, who suddenly appears on the scene. The divine blessing, which included the promise of many descendants and of the land of Canaan, now passes to Isaac by God's free choice. *Navarre*

4. As Catholics, we say "I believe in...life everlasting" in the Apostles' Creed. The Catechism explains that life after death will either be spent in heaven or in hell after we have been judged on the basis of our "works and faith" (CCC 1021-1022). Look up and record one of the following verses that reflects our belief in life after death.

Daniel 12:2

Wisdom 3:1

Revelation 14:13

5. In verses 9-10, we learn that Abraham was buried with his wife, Sarah, in the field he purchased from the Hittites. What do you think the author wants us to know by telling us that both his sons attended his burial?

**NOTE:** [After Abraham's burial, God blessed his son Isaac who settled at Beer-lahai-roi (verse 11).] This is located in the Negeb region of southern Canaan, where the birth of Ishmael was first announced (16:14). *Ignatius Study Bible*

6. CONNECTION: Today we read a fitting epitaph for God's faithful servant. Whether our stay in this life is long or short, it matters little, unless like Abraham, we leave behind a testimony to the faithfulness and goodness of the Lord and a good example to others. Prayerfully consider how you hope to be remembered at the end of your days and record your thoughts.

Read Psalm 27:4. Begin your prayer today recommitting your life to God as long as you live.

## **DAY TWO**

Read Genesis 25:12-20

**NOTE:** Genesis 25:12-18 is the genealogy of Ishmael. His 12 sons, born of an Egyptian wife spread across northern Arabia. Ishmael is traditionally considered the father of the Arabs in Jewish tradition. *Ignatius Study Bible*

7. Today we learn more of Ishmael, Abraham's eldest son. The author restated that Ishmael was born to Sarah's Egyptian slave, Hagar (verse 12). Record one of God's promises concerning his birth.

Genesis 17:20 (promise to Abraham)

Genesis 21:18 (promise to Hagar)

8. In verses 13-16, the names of Ishmael's twelve sons are listed. What do you think are some of the economic and personal advantages of having such a large family of sons in this ancient culture?

9. In verse 17 the account of Ishmael's death is interjected in parentheses. Record how Holy Scripture marked his passing.

10. After a struggle with his younger brother for his father's affection and attention, we read today how the life of Ishmael turned out. Record a few thoughts to share on the life of Ishmael.

**NOTE: Once the fulfillment of God's promise to Ishmael was demonstrated, there was no further mention of him or his descendants.**

11. While Ishmael was becoming the father of many sons in the Desert of Paran, Isaac and Rebekah began their life together. Possibly because a different author wrote this chapter, a brief history of Isaac and Rebekah was included. Record one fact recalled about each of them in verses 19-20.

Isaac

Rebekah

**NOTE: Paddan-aram is the name used by the Priestly tradition for the northwest region of Mesopotamia, between the Habur and the Euphrates rivers. [Modern day south-central Turkey] *NABRE***

12. CONNECTION: Although he was not the chosen son of the promise, Ishmael thrived under God's blessing and became the father of a great nation. His twelve sons became the princes of the Bedouin tribes who together with the other Muslims of the region trace their heritage back to Abraham. When we're tempted to exclude others from our circle of believers, we should recall Ishmael, who was blessed by God and the beloved son of our ancestor in faith, Abraham. What are some things you can do to foster understanding among those of other religions or cultures?

Read Ephesians 4:1-3. Write a prayer today asking God to help you grow in love and tolerance for all his people.

### DAY THREE

Read Genesis 25:21-22

**NOTE:** Less attention is given to Isaac than to Jacob in these narratives, although he is an important link in the genealogical chain of Genesis because he passes the "blessing of Abraham" down to Jacob (28:4), who in turn passes the blessing to his 12 sons, who make up the family of Israel (49:2-28). *Ignatius Study Bible*

13. In verse 21 we learn that Isaac and Rebekah suffered from infertility, a problem similar to that of Abraham and Sarah. After Isaac prayed, the LORD granted his prayer and Rebekah conceived (verse 21). What lessons can we learn from this familiar story of pain, suffering and promises fulfilled?

**NOTE:** Isaac was 40 when they married and 60 when Rebekah conceived.

14. Refer to Genesis 16:1-4 and compare the behavior of Isaac and his father Abraham concerning their promised offspring.

15. In addition to Rebekah, infertility was a condition experienced by other women of ancient times (see Genesis 30:22-24; Judges 13:2-3; 1 Samuel 1:4-5; 19-20). Comment on whether you think the fact that God intervened to answer Rebekah's prayer for a child gives hope to women today who are dealing with infertility.

16. Soon after Rebekah conceived, her joy turned to dismay. During her pregnancy she felt her unborn children struggling within her (verse 22). What do you think she meant when she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?"

**NOTE:** The unborn twins are already wrestling for primogeniture (first-born status). This anticipates the fraternal rivalry between Jacob and Esau, which comes to a head when the younger Jacob usurps the blessing and birthright from the first-born Esau. Paul sees in these events the drama of divine election played out in history (Rom 9:10-13). *Ignatius Study Bible*

17. How did Rebekah choose to cope with this difficulty (end of verse 22)?

18. CONNECTION: Today we read that as Isaac prayed, Rebekah's barrenness was ended by the grace of God. The generosity and love of God can also bring new life to us when we are feeling unproductive or purposeless. Describe an area of your life that you desire to be transformed, refreshed or renewed by the grace of God and a step you can take to make that happen. Record some thoughts to share.

Read and record Isaiah 40:31. As you pray today, offer any desolation within you to God who can make all things new.

#### **DAY FOUR**

**Read Genesis 25:23-26**

19. In her distress over the children struggling within her Rebekah questioned the LORD. His response must have seemed quite baffling to her. Record what the LORD said by completing the phrases below from verse 23.

Two nations are in your womb

the one shall be stronger than the other

20. Normally, the first-born son would have been the heir through whom the covenant blessings would have passed. This was contradicted by what Rebekah was told by the LORD. How do you think she might have reacted to what she heard?

**NOTE: There are other times in Scripture when God chose the younger son over the elder. See Genesis 17:18-19; Genesis 37:3 ;1 Samuel 16:5-12.**

21. Read Romans 9:11-15. In these verses, St. Paul referred to God's purpose of election. What phrase in Romans indicates that nothing Rebekah's children would do could alter God's choice?

22. When it was time for Rebekah to give birth, we are not surprised to read in verse 24, "there were twins in her womb." Describe below the births of the twins of Rebekah and Jacob, who was sixty years old when they were born (verses 24-26).

the first child

his brother

**NOTES ON WORDPLAY:** The Hebrew term for red resembles the word "Edom", which is another name for Esau (25:30). The Hebrew term for hairy resembles the word "Seir", which is the mountainous region of southeast Palestine where the descendants of Esau settled (36:8). *Ignatius Study Bible*

The word *heel* in Hebrew, is a wordplay on the name of Jacob. This is the first of three scenes of striving with Esau. See vv. 27-34 and chap 27. **NABRE**

23. The Commentary on page 54 discusses the Old Testament theme of God's selection of someone to carry out his promises. Read the relevant passage from page 54 and record a few thoughts.

24. **CONNECTION:** The LORD spoke to Rebekah about the children in her womb telling her that, contrary to ancient tradition, the younger would be chosen over the elder. It is not giftedness, wealth, virtue or good works that determine whom God selects to carry out his purpose. Therefore, we should accept any work for which we are called with humility and gratitude, for with little effort we could find among our family, friends and acquaintances many more qualified and worthier persons that he might have chosen. Describe a person whom you believed was an unwise selection to accomplish a work for God and how he/she turned out to be the perfect choice.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. Keep in mind as you pray today, God does not always call those who are equipped, but equips those he calls.

#### **DAY FIVE**

**Read Genesis 25:27-28**

25. The author described Isaac's sons when they grew up. Record what you learn about them in verses 27-28 below.

Esau

Jacob

**NOTE:** Jacob is described as "quiet," but the Hebrew word "smooth" is better translated as "civilized" or refined." The Hebrew word *tam* is from a root meaning "to be complete, finished, perfect," but the word can also mean "smooth," as in the smoothness of Jacob's skin in contrast to Esau. The same Hebrew adjective is used elsewhere in Scripture to describe someone who is deceptive in their speech (Prov. 5:3; 26:28). Jacob becomes a man who is both "smooth" of skin, refined in his tastes, and deceptive--both smooth and slippery in his speech." *Agape*

26. The potential for tension between the two brothers could have been generated by their differences. Describe how you would characterize the personalities and temperaments of each.

27. Some competition is healthy or expected among siblings but why do you think it was unhealthy in the stories we have read in Genesis? Recall Cain and Abel and Isaac and Ishmael and record a few thoughts.

28. The relationships described in verse 28 predict that there may be trouble ahead for this family. What negative consequences and feelings could arise from the relationships between these parents and siblings?

29. Look up the following verses and record what is written in Scripture about favoritism or partiality.

Romans 2:10-11

James 2:1

James 2:9

30. CONNECTION: This week we learn about the favoritism shown by the parents of Jacob and Esau. Favoritism shown by parents, and other adults such as grandparents, teachers and coaches may contribute to children's feelings of resentment toward one another. These harmful feelings can last until adulthood, but the healing love of Our Heavenly Father, who loves all equally, can overcome lasting emotional harm. Describe a situation you may have observed in which the effects of favoritism were diminished through the intervention of God's grace.

Read and record 1 Peter 2:1. Remember as you pray today to ask God to rid you of all partiality and favoritism.

## DAY SIX

### Read Genesis 25:29-34

31. At the end of yesterday's readings, the author set the stage for rivalry between Isaac's two sons and today, the hostility begins. What was each of the young men doing in verses 29-30?

**NOTE:** The right of the firstborn is the privilege that entitled the firstborn to a position of honor in the family and a double share in the possessions inherited from the father. Contrary to custom, the preference here is for the younger son as it was in the choice of Isaac over Ishmael. *NABRE*

32. In verse 31 Jacob demanded that Esau first sell him his birthright. According to verse 32, what was Esau's answer to Jacob?

**THINK:** How does this reflect on the prophecy stated in verse 23 that was given by God to Rebekah when she was pregnant with her sons?

33. In a short interchange that took place between the two brothers, the stage was set for a future, more serious conflict. Compare and contrast Esau's priorities with Jacob's in this encounter in verses 33-34.

Esau

Jacob

34. The author described the conclusion of the scene, "Thus, Esau despised his birthright." Look up the word *despised*. Do you think that is the best word to describe how Esau treated his birthright? What word would you use?

**THINK:** Read [Ephesians 1:3-14](#). In this passage St. Paul joyfully wrote of the birthright we inherit as adopted sons and daughters of Our Father through Jesus Christ.

35. The Commentary states that "crafty" or "wily" creatures were very common in the literature of the ancient Mediterranean people (pages 53-54). Why might this type of character be appealing?



36. CONNECTION: Today we read that Esau traded the lasting benefits of his birthright for something he wanted in the moment. We often make the same mistake when we see something we want, but the decisions we make should be guided by the priorities and values we set for our lives. How can we be sure that our priorities direct us toward God and away from things that will harm our spiritual life? What are some ways to clarify our values in a secular world?

Jesus reminds us in Mark 8:36 to be careful not "to gain the whole world and forfeit" our lives. Today, pray that your desires are for the things of God and not for things of the world.

Read pages 53-54 in *The Book of Genesis* by Lawrence DiPaolo, Jr., Ph.D. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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