

WEEK THREE INTRODUCTION

Act II progressed through the Week 3 readings as we saw God continue to build the people of Israel. God's promise to Abraham propels each generation forward. God's plan and promise are being established. His gracious initiative promised in Genesis 3:15 continues. Yet, the mess of sinful people in a broken world magnifies as fresh wrinkles of depravity appear. Even as God's story focuses on His chosen people, sin's brokenness mars even the dearest of human relationships. Rivalry, envy, manipulation, and vengeance shout from almost every page. Families distort as people attempt to replace God resorting to concocted schemes to get what they want or to rid themselves of what they hate. Despite the flames of sin, God's world is not consumed. He keeps His promise to Noah to preserve the world. As He does, we see the remarkable, sometimes subtle, grace of God furthering His purpose, rescuing His people and extending His good into the world.

KEY SCRIPTURE

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

– Genesis 50:20

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This week's reading begins in Genesis 30. Here envy and rivalry arise within Jacob's family. Identify how envy leads to deceit, scheming, and manipulation. Is this God's design for human relationships? Envy and discontentment drive Rachel to attempt to scheme God out of the equation to get what she wants. How have discontentment and envy led you to try and "force" God's hand? What were the results?

Throughout this week's reading the characters engage in transactional relationships where they do something and expect something from someone else. How does this "I'll do this if you do that" type of living negatively impact people? How are God's interactions different in these chapters?

Reread Genesis 35:1-4. God graciously calls Jacob to return to Bethel (“the house of God”) to build an altar and worship. What does Jacob do in preparation? Why? What idols do you need to get rid of in order to take your next step in following Jesus? What is in the way of your worship and obedience?

In Genesis 37 and the following chapters, where do you see favoritism? Where do you see pride? How do favoritism and pride affect relationships?

Describe the whole track or trajectory of Joseph’s life. How did Joseph’s sufferings prepare him to be the means of his family’s rescue? How does Joseph’s life point ahead to Jesus? Read Philippians 2:5-11 and Hebrews 2:9-10 and 5:8-9.

Karma is an idea from eastern religions which says that a person’s future flows from the culmination of their actions. Some Christians even use this language and idea. You see a similar idea in Joseph’s brothers in Genesis 42:21. They believed they were suffering because they had caused suffering. In reality, what is happening in Genesis 42? What is God doing? How is God’s grace different than karma?

Memorize and meditate on Genesis 50:20. Can evil thwart the plan of God? Where else in Scripture do we see God working in, through, and despite the evils of sinful people? Reflect on Acts 2:22-24.

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy...Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.” -**Matthew 5:7, 9**

Who around you needs a touch of mercy? In our divided world, how will you make peace rather than tear it down? Be specific. Make a plan and share it with someone else.