

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are two teachers and every day during the past week we had a quiet time from 7 selected chapters from GENESIS in the Old Testament. Once a week we come together to share what we have learned from our quiet times. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM GENESIS.

(S) **SHARING FROM SELECTED CHAPTERS FROM GENESIS**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Genesis chapters 22, 24, 27, 28, 32, 39 and 45. Now we will use our notes to share important truths and lessons from some of these chapters and discuss some difficult passages.

(T) **Genesis chapter 22.**

I would like to share from Genesis 22:1-19 about Abraham. This chapter relates how God tested Abraham's faith and obedience. God may test man, but man may not test God, as the Israelites did in Numbers 14:22. God tested Abraham by commanding him to go and sacrifice his only son, the son he loved, as a burnt offering. A *burnt offering* had to be slaughtered first and then completely burnt on an altar. This was the most difficult test for Abraham, because his son, Isaac, was very unique. In the first place Isaac was the one who would inherit God's covenant promise made to Abraham. Through one of Isaac's descendants, God would bless all the nations on earth. In the second place Abraham had waited *25 years*, before God fulfilled this promise to him and Sarah. Now God was asking of Abraham to sacrifice all this in *one day!*

\*Abraham, Isaac and two servants travelled for three days, before they reached the place of sacrifice. God did not want Abraham to act on the spur of the moment, but to consider very well what he was going to do. Many times during those three days, Abraham could have turned back. God wanted Abraham's faith and obedience to mature. Only after Abraham's faith and obedience had been put to the test for a long time, could it be perfect. God wanted Abraham to bring this sacrifice only after deliberate reflection and in an attitude of complete submission to God.

\*When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar, arranged the wood on the altar and then told his son that *he* was to be the sacrifice! Isaac did not resist and Abraham bound him and put him on top of the wood on the altar. Then he reached for his knife to slay his only son, the one he loved.

\*At that moment the angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven and stopped him from slaughtering Isaac. The angel of the Lord spoke as if he was the LORD himself and said, "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld *from me* your son, your only son." Of course, God already knew that Abraham's faith would be strong enough to bring the most difficult sacrifice. The words, "Now I know", must be regarded as a human way of saying that *Abraham did not fail God's test*. Moreover, God did not need this test, but *Abraham and we need this test*. The first purpose of this test was to convince Abraham of the power of faith to conquer every situation. And the second purpose of this test was to convince me and readers of the Bible that God can work very powerfully in a weak and sinful human being.

\*Abraham's long journey was not in vain. When Abraham looked up, he saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. He took the ram and sacrificed it to God. Abraham realised that God provided this ram and so he called this place "The Lord will provide". In Abraham's future, God would again provide the Lamb that would take away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). That Lamb was Jesus Christ!

\*The angel of the Lord again spoke as if he was the LORD himself. He reconfirmed with an oath by himself the promises he had previously made to Abraham. Abraham's physical descendants would be very numerous - a reference to the several nations that emerged from Abraham. They would take possession of the cities of their enemies - a reference to the conquering of Canaan. And through one of his offspring, God would bless all the nations on earth - according to Galatians 3:8,16 this was a reference to Jesus Christ!

\*In a very unique way, this historical event points forward to the death of Jesus Christ. God the Father also gave up his Only and Beloved Son to die on the cross, so that through his sacrifice of atonement, everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, would not perish but have eternal life.

**(S) Genesis chapter 24.**

I would like to share from Genesis 24:1-60 about Isaac. This chapter relates how God guided Abraham's servant to find a wife for Isaac. Abraham entrusted an important task to his most trusted servant. The servant had to find a wife for his son Isaac from among Abraham's own relatives, and not from among any of the Canaanite nations. The reason was that these Canaanite nations lived in repulsive idolatry and gross immorality (15:16). While Abraham's own relatives were to some extent worshippers of idols (31:19), they still had knowledge of the LORD (24:49). The manner in which the servant had to swear to his master was an old custom, of which the meaning had been lost. Abraham was convinced that God, who had promised the land Canaan to him and his descendants, would also send his angel to go before his servant (1-9). So the servant loaded ten camels with goods and travelled to north-west Mesopotamia.

\*When the servant arrived at the water-well outside the city of Nahor, he prayed and asked that the Lord would give him success that very day! He prayed and asked that the Lord himself would point to the wife he intended for Isaac. But how would he know which is the Lord's choice for his master's son? So the servant prayed and asked God to guide him through the means of special circumstances. He asked God, that the woman might be the one he asked for a drink of water, and she would then not only give him, but also his camels water to drink. That would not be an easy task, because camels drink a lot of water and the water-wells were deep. A girl would have to climb up and down the well many times, before ten camels had enough to drink. Such circumstances would show in a convincing way that *that* girl was friendly, unselfish and hard-working (10-14).

\*God answered the servant's prayer very quickly. Even before he had finished praying, a girl came with her jar to fetch water. The servant hurried to meet her and asked her for a drink of water. She immediately complied and said that she would also draw water for his camels. While the girl worked, the servant watched her closely to learn whether or not the Lord had made his journey successful (15-21). When she was finished, he gave her some precious gifts, not only because he was thankful, but also because he believed that she might be the woman the Lord had chosen. Then he asked her whose daughter she was and if there was place at her father's house to spend the night. She answered that she was the daughter of Bethuel, who was the son of Nahor and Milcah and that there was plenty of place at her father's house. Then the servant bowed down in prayer and praised the Lord who had led him straight to the house of Abraham's relatives. Nahor was the brother of Abraham (22-27).

\*The girl's name was Rebekah. She ran to tell her grandmother and family what had happened. After the servant had been welcomed, he told Rebekah's family about Abraham and Isaac's wealth, about the reason why he had come and about how the Lord had guided him to this family and this girl. He told them about his prayer and how the Lord had answered his prayer quickly and minutely. Then he asked them if Rebekah may become Isaac's wife (28-49). In those days, the father and brothers decided to whom a daughter and sister may get married. But in this case, father Bethuel and brother Laban had nothing to decide, because they realised that the Lord had already made the decision for them. Also Rebekah believed this and was prepared to travel immediately back with the servant to Isaac (50-60).

\*This chapter is special, because it shows how quickly and minutely God can answer prayer. Everyone involved agreed that this was the Lord's decision and guidance. Therefore, when I ask God to guide me through special circumstances like this, then I must also allow God to confirm it by the fact that everybody involved also agree that it is God's decision and guidance.

**(T) Genesis chapter 32.**

I would like to share from Genesis 32:22-32 about Jacob. This chapter relates how Jacob wrestled with God. In Genesis chapter 32, we get a picture of the character of Jacob. His name 'Jacob' literally means "he grasps the heel" and figuratively stands for "he deceives". It was customary that an inheritance was given to the oldest brother. But years before Jacob had deceived his older brother, Esau, out of the inheritance by misusing Esau's fatigue and hunger. Jacob had also deceived his old and blind father, Isaac, by pretending that he was Esau when Isaac wanted to bless his oldest son. Jacob had twice cheated Esau out of his inheritance. Now Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men. Jacob was in great distress and did everything to survive. He divided his family and possessions in two groups and let them travel separately. He prayed to God in almost panic. He reminded God of his promises. And Jacob sent large gifts ahead to Esau to pacify him. Jacob was still a schemer and organiser.

\*During that night, a man wrestled with him till daybreak. According to Genesis 32:28, Jacob struggled with *God* or according to Hosea 12:2-5 with *the angel of the Lord*. God or the Angel of the Lord *appeared as a human* and *did not make use of his divine power*, but only employed his human power in the struggle. Jacob wrestled all night with all his human power and at daybreak the struggle had still not ended. The man could not overpower Jacob. The struggle was a real physical struggle and the man touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man (25). Finally, the man spoke and requested Jacob to let him go and thus revealed to Jacob who he was. Jacob's reply to the man shows that he realised that it was God, because he requested God's blessing. He said to the man, "I will not let you go unless you bless me" (26). Hosea 12:4 says that Jacob wept and begged the angel for his favour. This

shows that the struggle was not merely a *physical struggle*; it was also a *spiritual struggle*. Jacob knew that he did not deserve God's blessing. Nevertheless, he struggled to receive God's blessing.

\*During the night-long struggle, Jacob must have felt that he was struggling with the God, whom he had deeply offended by his sin and deception, and whom he now met in this struggle as his Just Judge. If God had destroyed him in this struggle instead of just injuring his hip, it would have been a just punishment. Jacob had misused his brother's fatigue and hunger and he had misled his old and blind father, to cheat his brother out of his inheritance. He had also cheated and stolen from his father-in-law. Jacob knew that he did not deserve God's blessing. Jacob must have come to the realisation that neither the blessing he had received from his father Isaac nor the blessings he had cheated out of other people would mean anything unless God blesses him. He must have come to the realisation that unless God blesses him, either God himself or his brother Esau would destroy him! The purpose of this struggle was *to bring Jacob to repentance and to plead for mercy from God*. The struggle was a real physical and spiritual crisis for Jacob. Jacob did not want to let the man go, unless he blessed him. So he pleaded for God's mercy and blessing with tears! Jacob persevered in this struggle all night, not because he had the right to be blessed, but because long ago in Genesis 28, God had promised to bless him! Finally, God blessed him! \*God changed his name. The change of name accompanied the covenant promise of God to him. 'Jacob' meant *deceiver* and refers to Jacob's cunning and deceit in trying to secure God's promise for himself. 'Israel' means "*he struggles with God*" and refers to his victory in his spiritual struggle in gaining the mercy and the promise of God. Jacob was victorious, not by his own strength, but by humbling himself to beg for mercy from God!

\*The man did not reveal his name to Jacob. His question, "Why do you ask my name?" contained a reprimand against Jacob's doubt if it really was God who met him. Jacob named the place 'Peniel', which means "face of God" and refers to the fact that Jacob firmly believed that he saw God face to face, and yet his life was spared (Ex 33:20)! God's blessing was also a guarantee for Jacob that in the coming encounter with Esau, he would not die.

#### (S) Genesis chapter 45.

I would like to share from Genesis 45:1-15 about Joseph. This chapter relates how Joseph forgave his brothers without any bitterness. Joseph was wrongly treated by his brothers. They had sold him as a slave to Egypt and he had spent many years in prison. Joseph could have reacted like most people do. He could have viewed this wrong treatment only from a natural, *horizontal* perspective. He could have *only seen the offenders*, who had treated him with injustice and not seen God in this event. He could have reacted only towards these offenders. He could have felt angry and hurt in his feelings by what his brothers had done to him. He could have hurt them back by revenging himself on them. He could have paid them back for the wrong they had done to him.

This manward reaction to wrong treatment views *the wrong treatment* itself as the most important issue and God is kept outside this event. This kind of reaction is called *bitterness*. But Joseph did NOT react to his brothers with bitterness. Joseph showed how he dealt with the wrong treatment of others.

\*In Genesis 37 we read how Joseph was wrongly treated by his own family. His brothers were jealous, mistreated him and finally sold him as a slave. They lied to his father that he had been killed by a wild beast. Joseph did not deserve this treatment. He was the innocent victim of his family's injustice!

\*In Genesis 39 we read how Joseph was wrongly treated by his employer. His employer's wife tried to seduce him several times, and because he consistently refused, she falsely accused him and he was thrown into prison. Joseph was completely righteous. Yet, he became the innocent victim of his employer's injustice!

\*In Genesis 40 we read how Joseph was wrongly treated by his friends. He had helped them while they were with him in prison, but later they forgot completely about him. He remained forgotten and alone in prison for many years!

\*In Genesis 41 we read how long Joseph suffered. He was 17 years old when he was sold as a slave to Egypt and he was 30 years old when he was finally released. Through an interesting chain of events, Joseph was released and became the prime minister of Egypt. But before that, he had spent 13 long years as a slave and a prisoner in a foreign country, *all because of the wrong treatment of other people!*

\*In Genesis 45 we read how Joseph made a Godward response to his wrong treatment. During a great famine, Joseph had stored up much grain in Egypt. His family in Canaan were threatened with starvation and his father sent his brothers to Egypt to buy grain. Thus, without realising it, his brothers stood before him asking for food. Joseph knew who they were, but they did not recognise who he was. Then Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, asked them to come close to him without fear. He *did not react horizontally* against his offenders with anger and threats, but he reacted *vertically towards God*. Four times he assured his brothers that it was *God* who had sent him ahead of his family to save their lives (Gen 45:5-9). Joseph saw God's hand in the mistreatment he suffered. Throughout these difficult years, Joseph had focused his attention on God and not on his offenders or his difficult circumstances! He focused his attention on

what God was doing, not on what his enemies had done to him! From God he had learned to be *the victor over mistreatment*, rather than *the victim of injured feelings*. *Joseph's difficulties had become God's possibilities!*

\*In Genesis 45 and 50 we read how Joseph finally made his manward response. He forgave his brothers. The reunion with his brothers must have been a touching scene: there was hugging, kissing, weeping and talking together. Probably tears of repentance and of joy. After his father's death, his brothers again became anxious that Joseph might now revenge himself against them. However, Joseph reassured them and affirmed his acceptance of them. He said, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you." Thus he reassured them and spoke kindly to them (Genesis 50:19-21). Instead of bitterness and revenge, Joseph only showed kindness and comfort. His injured feelings had healed many years before!

\*Like Joseph, when I am treated wrongly, I want to react towards God and not towards man. I want to see God's hand in what is happening. I want to look to God for grace to react correctly. I will expect to draw benefit from the painful experience. Thus, when people treat me wrongly, I will pray to God, study the Bible about what I should do and try to reconcile myself to the offender. This Godward reaction to wrong treatment views *the wrong treatment* as the least important and God and his purpose as the most important!

**(T) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Every day have a quiet time from one chapter from Exodus. The selected chapters are Exodus 1, 2, 3, 18, 20, 32 and 33. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share your discoveries, lessons and blessings.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's kingdom" and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net)

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".