**TIME ALONE WITH GOD**

Ingredients:

* Half an hour, every day.
* Quiet, so you focus on yourself and on God;
* Prayer, worship, thanksgiving, as your response to God
* Word, so you can ponder His truth
* Life, people and events, so you are aware of Him in these situations

Method:

* Time – a fixed time when you are unlikely to be interrupted is best but more important is to actually start having such a time with God.
* Quiet – A simple method is to be quiet until you are aware you are in God’s presence before you start to respond to Him.
* Word – Read and be familiar with what is said. Meditate on the Word: “What does it say?” “What does it mean?” “How should I respond?” You may use the questions to help you or set them aside.
* Life – Use the time to also be aware of the things that are happening, inside you and around you. Bring these before God and speak to Him.

# Monday and Tuesday

[**GENESIS 27:1-40**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2027&version=NIV)

Remember this is your time alone with God. It is a time to tell God what is on your mind (thinking back over the past day), listen to him speak to you (reading and meditating on a bible passage), and finally, to respond to him (prayer). The questions are there to help you do this. Ignore them if they do not help. If your time is limited, I suggest that you don’t do everything in one go but spread them over the two days.

1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you during the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [GENESIS 27:1-40](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2027&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, ‘Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.’* Rebekah was paraphrasing what Isaac said to Esau, but what detail did she add to it? Do you think it is significant as to why Rebekah chose to ensure that it was Jacob who received the blessing instead of Esau?
2. *“Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you … My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.”* Rebekah was very determined that Jacob would be the one to receive Isaac’s blessing. Why? *“Are you really my son Esau?” he asked. “I am,” he replied.”* Caught in the deception, Jacob had no choice but to lie directly to his father. Do you think this was what he wanted, or this was all his mother?
3. *“Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. May God give you heaven’s dew and earth’s richness— an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed.”* What does the blessing give to Jacob (see v37)? Do you think this blessing is about passing on the blessing of God promised to Abraham and to Isaac?
4. *“I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?”* Why did Isaac feel that he had nothing left to give Esau? What had he given to Jacob (that he intended for Esau)? *“Your dwelling will be away from the earth’s richness, away from the dew of heaven above. You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck.”* Was this a blessing or a prophecy? Why did Isaac say this?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**G**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2026&version=NIV)[**ENESIS 27:41-28:9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2027&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [G](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2026&version=NIV)[ENESIS 27:41-28:9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2027&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob. … Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Harran.”* This was the outcome of Rebekah’s manipulation. Do you think this was her intention (see v45)? What do you think was her intention? Do you think she was right to do what she did to achieve the outcome she desired?
2. *“Why should I lose both of you in one day?”* In the narrative, whenever Rebekah was speaking to Jacob, Isaac was always “your father” and Esau “your brother” and Jacob “my son.” Yet when crunch time came, she felt that the loss of both her children would be too much. Do you think she loved her son Esau and was it a realisation only when she was about to lose them both?
3. *Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I’m disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living. … So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him.”* (See chapter 26:34-35 for context.) Do you think Isaac was aware of Rebekah’s role in the deception? How does he feel about the outcome (see Genesis 27:35, 37) and how does he respond to it (see Genesis 28:1-4)?
4. *“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham.”* This time Isaac’s blessing is directly about God’s blessing given to Abraham and to Isaac. What do you think of Isaac’s response? Do you think the stolen blessing and this blessing are one and the same?
5. *“Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac; so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.”* What do you think of Esau from what you have learned so far? Do you think God choosing Jacob over Esau doomed Esau to be a second-rate character playing catch-up to Jacob, or God chose Jacob because he knew Esau would turn out to be a second rate character, or what Esau turned out to be was always Esau’s choice (as far as he had a choice) and God’s choosing had no bearing?

# Friday and Saturday

[**GENESIS 28:10-22**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2028&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [GENESIS 28:10-22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2028&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *“Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.”* Compare Jacob’s journey to Harran to look for a wife, and Abraham’s servant’s journey to the same place to look for a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24:10). Why such a difference? What is the true meaning of Jacob’s journey to Harran (see Genesis 27:42-23) despite the blessing he received from Isaac (vv3-4)? What is Jacob’s own evaluation of his situation (see vv20-22)?
2. *There above it stood the Lord, and he said: “I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”* Finally God came into the picture and gave Jacob the same promise that he gave to Abraham and Isaac, validating the blessing that Isaac bestowed on Jacob before he left. How did Jacob respond to God’s promise (see vv20-22)?
3. *When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.” Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.* How did Jacob respond to his dream? What was his attitude towards God?
4. Looking back at the rivalry between the brothers and what Jacob did, do you think he was after what he just experienced (the God of Abraham and Isaac) or it was all about inheriting the family fortunes, or perhaps he had some sense of what the blessing means but not in clarity or detail, or it was just sibling rivalry escalated by Rebekah? Do you think God’s appearance and promises to Jacob was because of all that had happened (with Jacob being blessed, albeit by deception)?
5. Essentially God appeared to Jacob at a time when his and his mother’s manipulations have resulted in him leaving his home and family with nothing but a very uncertain future. Why would this be a good time for God to enter into Jacob’s life? What did God promise Jacob? What do you think of the vow Jacob made in response? What is his view of God at this point?

# Sunday

**THE GOD OF JACOB**

*“I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac.”*

It is very instructive to note that God never (well, I have not done a thorough research but based on what I remember having gone through Genesis last year) complained about the shortcomings of Abraham and Isaac, but shortcomings there were aplenty. In Genesis 26:5 God said that “Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions” and that was sufficient.

This becomes more apparent when we get to the story of Jacob.

The author of Genesis paints us a picture of Jacob by describing how he was born, grasping the heel of his brother as they both entered the world. This trait of taking advantage of circumstances for his own gain was on display when he persuaded his brother to surrender his birthright and when he tricked Isaac into blessing him. It is true that the main instigator of the second was Rebekah who very likely was trying to make sure that the prophecy that she received when she inquired about her pregnancy actually came to pass; but it nonetheless exemplified the man.

Jacob was not a very nice man.

The fact that God chose to work with Jacob and not Esau even though Esau had certain things in his favour has become the biblical model to understand the basis for God’s involvement with man. God chose Jacob over Esau before either of them were born. One could argue that God foreknew, except that Jacob was not a nice man or a good father, even in his old age. It would also be theologically unpalatable to think that the manipulations of man could determine the will of God, or the fact that Esau was older by a few minutes. These are reasons that man thinks qualify or disqualify a person from God’s will but of course it is theologically unsafe to think that God would surrender his will to these trivialities. No one would ever be good enough to earn the goodwill of God.

Paul puts it in this way in Ephesians 2: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

And more directly in Romans 9: Not only that, but Rebekah’s children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

Just as Abraham responded in faith and in obedience, Jacob too responded to the God who appeared to him in a dream at a point when he had nothing to offer. All he had was God’s promise and ever so tentatively, Jacob responded to him.

The God of Jacob is the God who loved us while we were sinners and sent his Son to die for us. It is never about us because there is nothing we have to offer him. It is all about him.

*Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the Lord will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”*

1. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down in the past week. Read the short sharing above. Does it add anything to your own thoughts?
2. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.