



# groups

## Introduction to February Sermon Series

In January, David led us through the story of God in 4 words – Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. Beginning in February, we will look at major characters in the Old Testament. Each week, we'll look at one character, ask how this character points to Jesus and how we can see our story in his or her story.

Our goal in reading the Bible is not only to know more about the Bible and God or to know the stories better, but also to do what God teaches in His Word. This month, we want to equip you with a way of applying the Bible that you can share with your Life Group. At the end of these discussion guides there will be the same question, so that your group members can learn this method. The method can be abbreviated by the acronym, SPACES. Each week, ask your LifeGroup this question:

“Based on what we’ve read this week, is there:

- A SIN you need to confess
- A PROMISE you can claim
- An ATTITUDE you need to adopt
- A COMMAND you need to obey
- An EXAMPLE you need to follow/avoid, or
- SOMETHING you can praise God for?”

**We’ve included a printable bookmark with the SPACES acronym on it (page 11). Each bookmark will have the Bible-reading plan related to the weekend sermons for the month of February. We recommend printing off the bookmark and giving it to your group members to help them remember and practice answering that question in group gatherings and in their own study.**

### *How to Use This Discussion Guide*

- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text’s theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Some of the questions are the same from week-to-week. This choice is intentional so that people can better learn how to read the Bible for themselves. Reading the Bible should help us understand who God is, who we are, and realize that the Bible calls us to change with the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
3. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what David said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the



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group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, “That’s a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we’re studying?”

4. **Encourage participation, but don’t let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don’t allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people are just unaware of themselves and how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
5. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, “What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?”

We pray that you will hear God speak through His Word and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His story.

## Week 1: Abraham

**Sermon Date: February 2-3, 2019**

**Theme:** God made a promise to Abram (also known as Abraham) to give him land, make him a nation, and bless the world through him. Abram responded with faith (trust) in God's promise. Likewise, we wait on the Lord's promises with faith, trust and hope.

- **What is the most significant promise you have made? Were you able to keep the promise? Why or why not?**
- **What determines whether we can believe a promise that has been made?**

**Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 12:1-4 and 15:1-21.**

- **What were the promises God made to Abram? How do these promises point to the coming of Jesus?**

Leader's Note: In Genesis 3:15, God promised He would send someone through the woman, Eve, who would crush Satan's head. In this passage, we see that promise getting clearer as God chooses a lineage through which this Snake-Crusher would come. By choosing a barren and elderly couple, God was showing that it was He, and not mankind, who was fulfilling the promise. Throughout the Old Testament, God makes promises (covenants) that point to the coming of Jesus.

- **In Genesis 12, Abram dropped everything to follow God's leading. In Genesis 15, Abram struggled to believe. Why do you think he struggled the second time?**
- **How might you have felt if you were Abram in each situation? Why?**
- **What do these passages reveal about God? His character, His desires, and His actions?**
- **How did God move Abram from unbelief to belief?**

Leader's Note: God reminds Abram of His power and sovereignty, signified by having him look at the sky. God's power is immense enough to create the universe and all the stars, so He reminds Abram to not fix his eyes on his body's limitations or God's timing but on God's power. He also reminded Abram of where God has already kept His promises.

- **Despite having a faith that pleased God (v. 6), Abraham still needed proof that God would come through on His promises (v.8). It seems as though Abraham's faith was not perfect trust but needed reassurance. Is this encouraging or discouraging to you? How so?**
- **How did God answer Abram's question from verse 8? What amazes you most about this response?**

Leader's Note: The sign of passing between cut parts of animals was a common practice for sealing a covenant or promise (see Jeremiah 34:31). If the covenant maker broke the promise, he or she would risk being put to death in the same manner as the animals. In this setting God takes on the full risk of the covenant. In essence, He says if He didn't fulfill His promises, then His holiness and perfection would be cut to pieces. It was a sign of the seriousness of His promise.

**Ask a volunteer to read Romans 4:18-25.**

- **According to this passage, what has God promised us?**
- **What does this passage reveal about mankind? What we are or should be?**

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- From what we've read and discussed together, is there:
  - A SIN you need to confess
  - A PROMISE you can claim
  - An ATTITUDE you need to adopt
  - A COMMAND you need to obey
  - An EXAMPLE you need to follow/avoid, or
  - SOMETHING you can praise God for?

Close in prayer, thanking God for the promises of Jesus Christ and to give you the faith of Abram.



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## Week 2: Isaac

**Sermon Date: February 9-10, 2019**

**Theme:** God tested Abraham's faith and resolve to follow Him by asking Abraham to make an ultimate sacrifice. We, likewise, will go through tests and difficult times. Because of God's promises and love, we can trust Him to do what is best for us in the end.

- **What is the most difficult sacrifice or decision you've ever had to make? How did this decision or sacrifice grow you as a person?**

Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 22:1-19.

- **Why do you think people struggle with this passage in the Bible? Do you struggle with it?**

Leader's Note: It's difficult to think of God asking a father to sacrifice his son, even though eventually God stopped him. And this was the son of the promise to Abraham which we looked at last week. We must wrestle with the fact that God commanded a child sacrifice – which in other cultures at the time, was not out of the ordinary. In fact, the pagans in Canaan would often pass their children through fire to get food from their 'gods.' God was demanding the same faith that pagans showed their false gods. We must also realize God tested Abraham's faith through the most severe command He could make, and in doing so, He revealed Abraham's faith and pointed to the cross where God Himself would place His Son on an altar for us.

Because this passage can be challenging for many – both believers and non-believers – here are two blogs which can help you better understand this account: <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/abraham-isaac/> and <https://www.gotquestions.org/why-does-God-test-us.html>. Also, if you have further questions, contact [groups@foresthill.org](mailto:groups@foresthill.org) or the director of your LifeGroup.

- **What does this passage reveal about God? His nature, desires or actions?**
- **Why do you think God tested Abraham? Was it because God needed to know what was in Abraham's heart or was there another reason?**

Leader's Note: Elsewhere in the Bible, we are told that God knows what is in the hearts of mankind (i.e 1 John 3:20; Acts 1:24). However, He tests us. Why? Because we don't know what's in our hearts. Through testing us, we can see our faith proven or disproven. We can see where we need to trust Him or turn from sin. God knows us and He made us. He knows us better than we know ourselves.

- **Imagine one of your friends read this story and asked, "Why would God demand a father kill his son? Doesn't that make God evil?" How might you respond?**
- **Is God within His rights and justice to demand Isaac's life? What reasons do you have for your answer?**

Leader's Note: God made everything and He has the right to claim it all, including our lives. Since everyone is born with sin, He is right and just to claim our lives.

- **What do you think Abraham would have thought or felt in this situation?**
- **How did Abraham respond to God's command?**

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Ask a volunteer to read Hebrews 11:8-19.

- How does this passage clarify what happened with Isaac and Abraham? How does this affect/change the way you read this story?
- According to this passage, how does the Abraham-Isaac story point to the death and resurrection of Jesus?
- What can we learn from this passage about approaching difficult parts of the Bible? Why is keeping the “big picture” in view important?
- From what we’ve read and discussed together, is there:
  - A SIN you need to confess
  - A PROMISE you can claim
  - An ATTITUDE you need to adopt
  - A COMMAND you need to obey
  - An EXAMPLE you need to follow/avoid, or
  - SOMETHING you can praise God for?

Close in prayer, asking for God’s strength to trust Him in hard times and asking God to use those times to grow you to be more like Jesus.

## Week 3: Jacob

**Sermon Date: February 16-17, 2019**

**Theme:** God promises to be with us and provide for us, and God always keeps His promises.

- **Have you ever been in the room with someone whose presence carried weight, authority or power? How did you respond to his/her presence, and why?**

**Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 28:10-22.**

- **God made a solemn promise to Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham (Genesis 15:18-21), to give him land. In this passage, we see Jacob leaving the promised land. Why is this significant?**

Leader’s Note: Jacob is leaving the promised land as a result of his deceit in tricking his father and stealing a birthright that belonged to Esau, his brother. Esau was furious and planned to kill Jacob. So Jacob’s mother sent him away until Esau’s anger subsided. Jacob was God’s chosen heir of the covenant God made to Abraham. When Jacob leaves, the promise could be seen as being in question. But God is faithful.

- **How does God’s promise to Jacob in verses 13-15 answer the concern of Jacob leaving the land?**
- **What does this passage reveal about God? His concerns, desires, and actions?**
- **What does this passage reveal about Jacob? What kind of man is he?**
- **How does Jacob respond to God’s dream and promise?**
- **In verses 20-22, is Jacob testing, or bargaining with, God? Why is this significant?**

Leader’s Note: Jacob seems to be bargaining with God here. “If you do this, God, then you will be my God.” In fact, Jacob does this several times throughout his story. Jacob’s commitment to God is ambivalent. He seems reluctant to call God “my God” and instead refers to God as the “God of my father” several times. It’s not until Jacob wrestles with God (Genesis 32) that he claims God as his own. This seems to show that God is patient with us in our doubts and our ambivalence.

**Ask a volunteer to read John 1:47-51.**

- **What connection does this passage have with the story of Jacob we just read?**
- **What is Jesus claiming by referring to this story?**
- **What does this passage reveal about Jesus?**

Leader’s Note: Jesus is the ladder that connects heaven to earth. He is the bridge by which heaven comes down and by which we, as sinful man, can receive entry into God’s Kingdom.

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- From what we've read and discussed together, is there:
  - A SIN you need to confess
  - A PROMISE you can claim
  - An ATTITUDE you need to adopt
  - A COMMAND you need to obey
  - An EXAMPLE you need to follow/avoid, or
  - SOMETHING you can praise God for?

Close in prayer, thanking God for being faithful and providing a way to Him through Jesus.



## **Week 4: Joseph** **Sermon Date: February 23-24, 2019**

**Theme:** We can look for God's redeeming work and celebrate His faithfulness in our suffering.

- **Have you ever felt betrayed or cheated? How did you overcome that feeling?**
- **If one of your friends felt betrayed or cheated, how might you try to help him/her?**

**Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 37:2-11**

- **What kind of boy does Joseph appear to be?**
- **How do you think the brothers and Jacob felt about Joseph? How would you have felt?**

**Ask another volunteer read Genesis 37:12-34.**

- **What varied motivations did the brothers have for wanting to get rid of Joseph?**
- **What do you think Joseph was thinking or feeling in the pit?**

**Ask another volunteer to read Genesis 39:1-21.**

- **After all of this, what do you think kept Joseph from becoming bitter or despairing?**

Leader's Note: Joseph probably avoided the trap of bitterness by putting his faith in the Lord. Surely Joseph had bad days, but the fact that he maintained his integrity is a great indication that he continued to put his trust in the Lord. It would have been easy to give up after these events and think that trying to do right doesn't matter.

- **What difference do you think his awareness of God's presence made in Joseph's life?**

**Leader, at this point, summarize the story of Joseph. You can use the summary below as a help in this.**

From prison, Joseph was granted favor in the sight of Pharaoh. He was placed in a position of power over the food supply in Egypt. When a famine hit the land, Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to get food. They appeared before Joseph, and although they did not recognize him, Joseph recognized them but he kept it to himself. Through a series of events, Joseph's younger brother was falsely accused of stealing. Still not recognizing Joseph's identity, the brothers throw themselves down at the mercy of their brother, Joseph. Joseph tells them who he is, and Joseph's father and brothers come to live in Egypt. Then ...

**Ask another volunteer to read Genesis 50:15-21.**

- **How was Joseph able to forgive his brothers for all they had done to him?**

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- What did the story of Joseph reveal about God? His character, desires, and actions?
- How can Joseph's story help us from becoming bitter and to even find joy in hard times? Use a specific example from your life.
- From what we've read and discussed together, is there:
  - A SIN you need to confess
  - A PROMISE you can claim
  - An ATTITUDE you need to adopt
  - A COMMAND you need to obey
  - An EXAMPLE you need to follow/avoid, or
  - SOMETHING you can praise God for?



Close in prayer, thanking God for being faithful even when we might not see Him working.



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## SPACES bookmark

1. Cut out bookmark
2. Fold in half
3. Put in Bible

SPACES Bible Reading	February Bible Reading
<p>Open with prayer, asking God to speak to you through His Word.</p> <p>Read or listen to the passage.</p> <p>Ask yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What was said or what happened?</li><li>• What did it mean?</li><li>• In this passage, was there a:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ <b>Sin</b> I need to confess?</li><li>○ <b>Promise</b> I can claim?</li><li>○ <b>Attitude</b> I need to change?</li><li>○ <b>Command</b> I should obey?</li><li>○ <b>Example</b> I should follow/avoid?</li><li>○ <b>Something</b> I can thank God for?</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Pray in response to what God revealed in His Word.</p>	<p><b>Abraham</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 12</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 15-16</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 17</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 18-19</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 21</li></ul> <p><b>Isaac</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 22</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Hebrews 11:1-19</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 24:1-28</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 24:29-67</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 25:1-11 and 26:1-5</li></ul> <p><b>Jacob</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 25:19-34</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 26:34-27:46</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 29:1-30:24</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 32-33</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 35</li></ul> <p><b>Joseph</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 37</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 39-40</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 41-42</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 43-44</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Genesis 49-50</li></ul>
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