

Genesis

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, ... the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of Genesis using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (the five books of Moses, of which Genesis is the first) will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||} and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Shinin
12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵ that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven ... earth ... under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

serious that we pur sense of awe at ser the prospect of sinn Encouragement con readers that God's g desire (intention) at 21; CCC 308) (CC “work”, he address and trembling”, he good deeds were th not boast of your g within you (St. Augu **2:15 pervers** • Deuterono poetic lawsuit that and ingratitude du

A Thing to Harpagmos (G in the Greek O Occurrences of “robbery”. Its considerable d the leading vi (1) Some, like “something sea

Prepare

Read the Introduction to Genesis, paying particular attention to the *Literary Background* and *Themes* of the book and the *Christian Perspective* on it. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Genesis to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Genesis, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Genesis as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:1—2:4.** The note lists eight teachings of the first creation account. What are they? According to the note, what is the importance of the number seven?
2. **1:2.** Why is the RSV translation of “the Spirit of God” preferable to the translation “a wind from God” or “a mighty wind” in this verse?
3. **1:26.** If the plural “Let us” in God’s speech does not imply a belief in multiple gods, how should it be read?
4. **Word Study: Image and likeness (1:26).** What do the Hebrew words for “image” and “likeness” often denote? To what concepts does Genesis associate this word pair? How does Genesis apply the prerogative of sonship in a manner different from that of the political ideologies of the ancient Near East?

For application

1. **1:6–19.** Have modern discoveries of the size and nature of the universe challenged your view of God? How have you dealt with this challenge?
2. **1:26.** What does it mean to you that you are a created being? How does being created in the image and likeness of God affect your image of yourself?
3. **1:27.** How do you regard your own sexuality in view of that “image and likeness”?
4. **1:28.** How have your experiences of family shaped your attitudes toward procreation? How do those attitudes compare with the scriptural view of procreation as a blessing?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:2.** For man, what does it mean to bear the image of God? Of what is the Sabbath the sign in the Old Testament? The New Testament?
2. **2:7.** What Hebrew wordplay is used to describe the creation of man? What does dust symbolize? What makes man unique?
3. **2:9.** If the “knowledge of good and evil” is not a moral awareness of right and wrong, what is it? What would Adam later presume to do, then?
4. **2:21–24.** What four characteristics is the marriage covenant designed by God to have? As a permanent union of the spouses, what does the marriage covenant symbolize?

For application

1. **2:15.** While there are many benefits for doing work, what personal benefits can work provide? How can physical work make people better as human beings?
2. **2:16–17.** How does setting limits help you discipline children? In your experience either as a child or as a parent, what function has the threat of awful consequences served in discipline? How should a parent train children to recognize the consequences of disobedience?
3. **2:24.** How does the view of marriage as a covenant differ from the view of marriage as a contract? Once a covenant that forms a family begins, when does it end?
4. **2:25.** What is the link between nakedness and shame? Aside from physical nakedness, what other kinds of nakedness might there be? What kinds of shame might be linked to them?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **3:1.** Although the Hebrew term *nahash* often refers to a snake, to what else can it refer? How is the serpent “subtle” or cunning? What does the serpent’s question insinuate about God?

2. **3:6.** What makes Adam's capitulation to sin different from Eve's? If Adam's desire was not to "discern good from evil", what was it? What weapons did Christ use to conquer the devil?
3. **3:15.** To whom do the phrases "your seed" and "her seed" refer? What does the word "bruise" mean with respect to the deceiver? To the woman's offspring? How does Christian tradition interpret this text?
4. **3:17.** How does the curse of futility and decay affect the earth? How does it affect human toil? How does Jesus reverse this curse, according to St. Cyril of Jerusalem?

For application

1. **3:1–3.** What do you think is the most effective way to tell a lie? Why is the serpent's lie so effective with Eve? What mistakes does Eve make when the serpent first addresses her? (Compare with Jas 4:4–8.)
2. **3:7.** Reflect on those times when you did something of which you would rather God not have known. What were the consequences to your relationship with him? Have they been resolved?
3. **3:11–13.** How has playing the "blame game" affected your relationships with others? Why do you think it is so difficult to take responsibility for the harm you have done? What might be the antidote?
4. **3:16b–17a.** Have you experienced areas of tension and mistrust between the sexes? If so, in what were they? How have they affected your attitudes toward the other sex? How can you grow in healthy respect for the other sex?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **4:4.** What does an offering of "firstfruits" represent? What appears to be the main difference between Abel's sacrifice to God and Cain's?
2. **4:7.** What does God warn Cain about sin? In addition to negligent worship, to what sins does Cain yield? What does the reality of sin in primeval times presuppose about the natural law?
3. **4:15.** What does the "mark of Cain" signify? What does it seem that Cain fears?
4. **4:17–24.** What good and shameful characteristics are the descendants of Cain described as having? What is the point of presenting Cain's genealogy in this way?

For application

1. **4:3–4.** What is the difference between an intimate and a casual relationship with an important person? How appropriate do you think it is for our worship of God to be casual? How might a casual attitude toward worship diminish a proper respect for God?
2. **4:6–7.** How might the danger of falling into sin seem like a wild animal ready to pounce? Look up Mt 5:21–22. Given the example of Cain's sin, what do you think Jesus means about anger and the danger of judgment or even the fire of hell?
3. **4:17–24.** Even though our age is one of great technological and scientific advancement, what dangers do you see in it for our civilization? What needs to happen for us to avoid them?
4. **4:23–24.** When have you felt the desire to get revenge? How did you deal with that desire? Given the Christian vocation, how should one deal with vengeful desires?

Chapters 5—6:10

For understanding

1. **5:1–32.** What are some of the contrasts between Cain's line of descendants and Seth's? Whose line will the flood destroy, and whose will it preserve?
2. **5:5.** What are some of the approaches that have been taken to explain the immensely long life-spans of people before the flood? What are the difficulties with these approaches? What seems to be the best working hypothesis?
3. **6:1–4.** What are two interpretations from Jewish and Christian tradition that explain the meaning of the "sons of God" intermarrying with "the daughters of men"?
4. **6:6.** Why should the expression that "the Lord was sorry" not be taken literally? How does the Bible often describe the thoughts and actions of God, and why? What do these and similar word pictures communicate about God?

5. **6:9—9:19.** To what does the biblical flood story have close literary affinities? What is the theological significance of the story? What are the parallels with the creation story in the first chapter of Genesis? What allegorical significance do the Church Fathers find in the story?

For application

1. **5:4–31.** Why do you think young people want to live to be old and old people often want to die? What are your own attitudes about living to an old age? How do these attitudes reflect or contradict the Christian hope of heaven?
2. **5:28–29.** What hopes for their children do parents of newborns often have? How might these hopes be reflected in the names they select? What fears might parents have about their children?
3. **6:1–3.** Read the notes for vv. 1–4 and for v. 2. Why do you think it is morally and spiritually dangerous for committed Christians to marry persons who do not share their faith?
4. **6:5.** According to this verse, from where do evil thoughts come? How does this verse compare with what Jesus says in Mt 15:17–19? What is the antidote?

Chapters 6:11—8

For understanding

1. **6:18.** What does the Hebrew expression concerning God's covenant with Noah imply about it? What does it presuppose?
2. **7:2.** Why are only single pairs of unclean animals brought onto the ark, whereas seven pairs of clean animals are taken aboard? What might the number seven symbolize?
3. **8:6–12.** Why does the raven, when released, return to the ark but not the dove?
4. **8:20—9:17.** As expressed in the sign of the rainbow, what covenant obligation does God take upon himself? Of what is the Noahic covenant a renewal?

For application

1. **6:18.** Have you ever sensed that God was preparing you for impending trouble? How did you respond? For example, what preparations did you make or fail to make?
2. **7:11–12.** Have you ever been caught in a flood or other type of natural disaster, or have you known anyone who has had such an experience? How does one cope with the sense of helplessness in such situations? How can faith in God help?
3. **7:21–23.** What is “survivor’s guilt”? Why would someone feel guilty for having survived a catastrophe that claimed others? How can such guilt be assuaged?
4. **8:20.** Why do you think Noah took the clean animals and birds for sacrificial offerings instead of releasing them? In what way was such a sacrifice in keeping with Noah’s character?

Chapter 9

For understanding

1. **9:6.** Against what is murder a crime? Although the Lord can delegate his judicial authority to individuals or states to avenge wrongful deaths, what policy limits vengeance?
2. **9:22.** For what is the Hebrew idiom “seeing the nakedness of his father” a euphemism? Of what is Ham guilty? Of what does Ham’s perversity most likely provide the backstory?
3. **9:24.** What might the detail of Ham being the youngest son suggest about his motive? What are other Old Testament examples of attempts by family members to usurp another’s authority?
4. **9:26.** How is the blessing of Shem unique? When does the curse upon Canaan go into effect?

For application

1. **9:2–3.** Even though God gives animals and plants to man for food, “[m]an’s dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute” (CCC 2415). What purpose is man’s dominion over these creatures intended to serve?
2. **9:9–11.** To whom does God’s covenant renewal apply? What does that suggest about what mankind’s attitude toward creation should be?

3. **9:23.** What responsibility do we have to the victims of crime? What virtues might govern how we exercise that responsibility?
4. **9:25.** Given the explanation of Ham's crime in the note for v. 22, why does Noah curse Ham's son instead of Ham himself? What often seems to be the fate of the children of criminals, abusers, and alcoholics? Despite that fate, what is God's attitude toward them?

Chapters 10–11

For understanding

1. **10:1–32.** What does the table of nations in this chapter tell us about the national, geographical, and linguistic diversity of the ancient Near East? Geographically, what does the table outline? Why is Palestine situated in the very center of this world map?
2. **10:21.** From whom are the Israelites descended? From where does the name Hebrew come?
3. **11:1–9.** What does the Tower of Babel incident explain? What are the mudbrick towers thought to represent?
4. **11:4.** What does the family of man band together to do? Who actually acquires the "name" that the sinners of Babel coveted? What fear motivates the building? What are its ultimate consequences?

For application

1. **11:4.** The citizens of Babel wanted to "make a name" for themselves. What has been your driving ambition in life (e.g., fame, wealth, athletic ability)? How well have you succeeded at realizing it? What has been its effect on your spiritual life?
2. **11:6.** What are some technological advances of the last hundred or so years that were considered impossible in prior centuries? What are some of the good and evil uses to which they have been put? How similar do you think the modern scientific mind-set is to that of the citizens of Babel?
3. **11:7–8.** Has a failure to communicate ever caused separation in your family? If so, what have been some of the difficulties in restoring communication?

Chapter 12

For understanding

1. **12:1—50:26.** How are the patriarchal narratives often classified? What considerations favor the historicity of the narratives?
2. **Topical Essay: The Abrahamic Covenant.** What three promises did God make to Abraham? When does each promise become a covenant? How are the promises and covenants realized?
3. **12:7.** How does Abram sanctify the land of Canaan? What are some of the features of patriarchal religion? What religious role did the patriarchs perform in their families?
4. **12:10—13:1.** How does Abram's stay in Egypt foreshadow the story of Exodus?

For application

1. **12:1.** Have you ever felt that God was speaking to you personally? Why do you think he would or would not speak to you? How could you discern whether or not he did?
2. **12:4–5.** At what points in your life have you parted from your place of birth, your relatives, and your immediate family? What brought about the separations? What, if any, religious or spiritual consequences resulted from them?
3. **12:13.** Do you think Abram is simply keeping part of the truth hidden, or is he lying outright? What is a lie? Is it ever appropriate to divulge only a part of the truth in order to protect oneself or someone else? (Compare your answers with CCC 2483–84, 2489.)

Chapters 13–14

For understanding

1. **13:2–18.** What is the point of the story of how Lot and Abram go their separate ways?
2. **14:18.** What does the title "Melchizedek" mean? Who do various scholars believe that Melchizedek was? Why did Melchizedek bring out bread and wine on Abram's arrival at Salem? Allegorically, what do the actions of Melchizedek prefigure?
3. **14:20.** What does Abram's tithe to Melchizedek anticipate?

For application

1. **13:8–9.** Abram settles a dispute by allowing Lot to choose between alternative solutions. How does Abram's approach demonstrate wisdom? How are disputes like this handled in your family?
2. **13:10–11.** Lot chooses what appears to be the better alternative, though the choice later proves disastrous for him and his family. How do you go about deciding on a course of action that could shape the direction of your life? On what do you base your decisions? How does your relationship with God figure into your decision making?
3. **14:18.** According to the note on this verse, Melchizedek may bring out bread and wine as a thank offering following Abram's victory. Does gratitude figure into your sense of personal accomplishment? How do you concretely express gratitude to God for what you have or have accomplished?
4. **14:20.** Abram gives Melchizedek "a tenth of everything". What do you give to the Lord? What limits do you place on your giving?

Chapter 15

For understanding

1. **15:1–6.** How do these verses mark a critical juncture in Abram's spiritual journey? What opportunity is God giving Abram?
2. **15:6.** In the Genesis narrative, what acts indicate that Abram puts his trust in the Lord? What does the New Testament say that we learn from Abram about faith? What is "righteousness"?
3. **15:10.** What is the significance of cutting the animals in two? Who puts himself under threat of a curse in this ceremony?
4. **15:12–14.** What is implied about Abram's relation to the Promised Land when God tells him that Israel will experience 400 years of oppression before gaining possession of it?

For application

1. **15:1–6.** Scripture contains many promises that reveal God's loving care for us, such as salvation, everlasting life, and so on. How might promises like these test your faith? What stands in the way of trusting that God will fulfill them?
2. **15:8.** Abram asks how he can know that he will receive what God has promised. When you pray to obtain something for yourself or a loved one, for what kinds of assurance do you hope? How appropriate do you think it is to ask God for such assurance?
3. **15:12.** Abram experiences the approach of God as dread and great darkness. Have you ever felt the approach or presence of God? What was the experience like?
4. **15:13–16.** Sometimes, God's promises take time and the right circumstances to be realized. How easily do you give up waiting when someone promises you something good but does not say when the promise will be fulfilled?

Chapter 16

For understanding

1. **16:1–6.** What are the consequences of Sarai's fateful decision to give Hagar to the embrace of her husband? What do archaeological finds show about the ancient practice of surrogate motherhood?
2. **16:2.** What were the rights of a man's lawful wife over the child born of a surrogate mother? Why is Abram's "listening" to his wife an ominous note in the narrative?
3. **Word Study: Angel of the Lord (16:7).** How does this figure sometimes appear? With what characteristic is the angel of the Lord endowed, and what are some of his many tasks?
4. **16:12.** Why is Ishmael called "a wild donkey" of a man?

For application

1. **16:2.** What are some of the methods available today to help childless couples have children? Of those you can name, which are morally allowable and which are not? (Compare your answers with CCC 2373–79.)
2. **16:4.** Have you ever regarded with contempt someone in your family, your circle of friends, or your work environment? What brought about that attitude? How do you think the Lord regards such contempt?
3. **16:5–6.** In your immediate family, about what do you most frequently argue? What role do you tend to play: the Wronged Victim, the Artful Dodger, the Cool Logician, or something else? How do you feel about yourself during an argument?

4. **16:12.** Do you know anyone with personal characteristics like Ishmael's? How do you relate to this person? How do you think the Lord would have you relate?

Chapter 17

For understanding

1. **17:1–21.** What pattern does the circumcision covenant follow? What features does such a covenant have?
2. **17:4.** Which ancient peoples are descended from Abraham? What does the New Testament reveal about Abraham's destiny?
3. **17:5.** What are the original and the expanded meanings of Abram/Abraham's names? What does a change of name signify?
4. **17:11.** What roles does circumcision play in the Abrahamic covenant? Theologically, toward what does it point? Historically, who has practiced circumcision? In the New Covenant, how does Baptism act as the counterpart of circumcision?
5. **17:15–21.** What is the more precise definition of God's promise to Abraham in 15:18–21?

For application

1. **17:5.** What do you think of your given name? If you had the opportunity to change it, what name would you choose? What would be its meaning to you? For example, what might it suggest about your character or how you see your destiny?
2. **17:7.** As a member of the New Covenant, how do you experience your covenant relationship to God? How does your family experience it?
3. **17:10–11.** What is the "mark" of a Christian? What practical difference in your everyday life does it make to you that you are baptized?
4. **17:18–21.** Even though the older Ishmael is circumcised (v. 23), God's covenant blessings come through the younger Isaac's line (v. 21). Where does that leave Ishmael? Considering the whole Abrahamic narrative up to now, what factors might explain God's preference for the unborn Isaac?

Chapter 18

For understanding

1. **18:2–3.** Who were the three men who came to visit Abraham? Why did Abraham worship only one of them?
2. **18:6.** Why did Abraham tell Sarah to prepare three measures of flour? In a moral sense, for what virtues do the three measures stand? What do they contain?
3. **18:14.** For what does this verse prepare? What is its New Testament echo?
4. **18:22–33.** What does this dialogue say about the character of God? How do these themes play out in the next episode?

For application

1. **18:1–8.** Have you ever received extravagant hospitality such as Abraham shows to the three men? What was your reaction when it was offered? When an opportunity comes for you to show hospitality to your guests, what do you offer them?
2. **18:11–12.** Have you ever questioned or doubted the Lord's ability to provide for you? What did the eventual outcome do to enhance or damage your trust in God's provision?
3. **18:14.** Many atheists question God's power because of the evil in the world, arguing that an all-powerful God should be able to prevent evil from happening. How would you answer them?
4. **18:20–32.** Have you ever found yourself, in fact or in effect, haggling with God regarding the outcome of a prayer intention? For what were you praying? How was the prayer answered?

Chapter 19

For understanding

1. **19:1.** What might Lot's "sitting at the gate" indicate about him? How does he behave toward the two visitors?
2. **19:5.** What motive does the mob have for surrounding Lot's house? What form of sexual depravity was rampant among the Canaanites? How was it punished in ancient Israel?

3. **19:24–29.** What happens to the cities of the valley? What function does the memory of this catastrophe serve?
4. **19:30–38.** What do these verses recount? What other episode of drunkenness does it recall?

For application

1. **19:2.** What are some of the dangers of spending the night on the street, as homeless people often must do? What services for the homeless exist in your area? What service, if any, do you render at these facilities?
2. **19:12–14.** Why do you think people ignore warnings of impending disaster? If God were today to warn of approaching destruction unless people repented, what do you think the response might be? Can you think of any times in history when God provided such warnings?
3. **19:24–25.** When a natural disaster such as a flood, a volcanic eruption, or an earthquake occurs that causes numerous deaths, should the cause be attributed to God? What other causes for human casualties might there be?
4. **19:31–38.** What makes the act of deriding the ancestors of one's enemies so insulting? What function does slander or mockery serve for those who deliver the insult? What might be the Christian response to those who insult one's family?

Chapter 20

For understanding

1. **20:1–18.** What does this episode show about God's promise to Abraham? What happens to Sarah?
2. **20:2.** What does the name Abimelech mean? What function does it serve? Who else encounters someone of this name years later?
3. **20:7.** What does the word "prophet" mean in connection with Abraham?
4. **20:12.** Is Abraham telling the truth about Sarah being his sister? When did prohibitions against marriages to close relatives arise?

For application

1. **20:3–7.** Have you ever had a dream that was so vivid or memorable that you felt the need to take it seriously? What sort of difference (e.g., moral or religious) did it make? In what way might it have been a grace from God?
2. **20:11.** Abraham admits to misrepresenting himself out of fear of an unfamiliar and possibly hostile community. When you enter a similar sort of community, how do you tend to protect yourself? Has this self-protection been justified or not?
3. **20:14–16.** Abimelech makes extravagant gestures to prove his good intentions and right the situation. When you are shown to be in the wrong, how do you know when a simple apology is sufficient and when to go beyond that to rectify things?

Chapter 21

For understanding

1. **21:3.** What does the name Isaac mean? What does it recall?
2. **21:9.** What negative sense does the Hebrew word for "playing" have in this verse? What is the teenager Ishmael doing? How will Paul later interpret this incident?
3. **21:22–34.** What pattern does Abraham's covenant with Abimelech follow? What do both parties do during the ratification ceremony?
4. **21:31.** How are the two translations of the name Beer-sheba related? In this episode, how does Abraham enact his oath?

For application

1. **21:6–7.** Sarah responds to the birth of Isaac with a certain glee, saying that God has provided laughter for her. What part does laughter or mirth play in your relationship with God? How enjoyable is it to you? What do you think of God's "sense of humor" in happy coincidences?
2. **21:9–10.** What do you think of Sarah's sense of humor in this passage? If you are a parent or a childcare worker, how do you respond when you judge the conduct of your children's friends to be inappropriate?
3. **21:17.** An angel asks the outcast Hagar what troubles her and encourages her not to be afraid. What is it that most troubles you or makes you afraid? On a spiritual level, how do you deal with fear?

Chapter 22

For understanding

1. **22:2.** What does the Hebrew version of this text convey about Isaac? How does the Greek Old Testament translate “only son”? How is Isaac a type of Christ? What is later located on Mt. Moriah?
2. **22:16–18.** According to Paul’s discussion in Gal 3, what does the divine oath of this chapter indicate that God will do? What does Paul say the binding of Isaac prefigures?
3. **Word Study: Descendants (22:18).** To what can the Hebrew word for “seed” refer? What are its individual and collective meanings? How does Paul view Isaac (individual meaning) and Israel (collective meaning)?
4. **Topical Essay: The Sacrifice of Isaac.** How do some commentators interpret the significance of this episode? In terms of its spiritual significance, what part might it play in Abraham’s developing relationship with the Lord? What is the importance of the lesson Abraham learns? In terms of the episode’s theological significance, how does Judaism understand the significance of the binding of Isaac? How does Christian theology view the episode from prophetic and typological perspectives?

For application

1. **22:1.** What is a “test” from God? Do you think he has ever tested you? What was the outcome?
2. **22:2.** Many people avoid or delay surrendering everything to the Lord, fearing that he will take away from them something or someone they treasure. What do you fear the Lord will take away from you?
3. **22:16–18.** How might you be withholding from the Lord something of yourself? What would be the benefit of giving it over to him?
4. **22:18.** What does “obedience” mean to you? Does obedience to God’s voice result in liberation or enslavement?

Chapters 23–24

For understanding

1. **23:1–20.** What does this chapter stress about Abraham’s negotiation for a burial plot for Sarah? What does the purchase of the site anticipate?
2. **23:9.** Who will be buried in the cave at Mach-pelah? Although the text says the site is in Hebron, where does Samaritan tradition locate it?
3. **24:2.** What do loins or thighs represent in Genesis? What kind of gesture is putting the hand under the thigh? In the context of this verse, what does the oath require of the servant?
4. **24:10.** Why does the servant take ten camels on his journey? What do we know about the domestication of camels?
5. **24:65.** What is the importance of the servant’s reply, “It is my master”, to Rebekah’s question? Why does Rebekah cover herself upon hearing the answer?

For application

1. **24:3–4.** Because of God’s call to him, Abraham does not want a Canaanite woman as a wife for his son. What relationships, personal or cultural, come along with the marriage partner one selects? What spiritual hindrances might some of those relationships bring into the marriage?
2. **24:6–8.** How does the locale in which you live affect your relationship with the Lord?
3. **24:12–14.** The servant prays for a sign to confirm his selection of a wife for Isaac. What standards do people of your acquaintance use in their selection of a marriage partner? How might one judge whether the selection is likely to be spiritually beneficial or not?
4. **24:67.** Isaac learns to love Rebekah after he marries her. Is this the order promoted by our modern culture? How might learning to love one’s spouse after the wedding be good for the marriage?

Chapter 25

For understanding

1. **25:19—36:43.** Although less attention is paid to Isaac than to Jacob in these chapters, why is Isaac an important link in the genealogical chain of Genesis?

2. **25:21.** In what way is Isaac like his father Abraham? Why?
3. **25:22.** For what are the unborn twins in Rebekah's womb already struggling? What does the struggle anticipate, both in this chapter and beyond the horizon of Genesis? What does Paul see in these events?
4. **25:26.** How does Jacob's name foreshadow his future?

For application

1. **25:21.** Isaac prays for his wife Rebekah. How often do you pray for members of your family? In general, for what do you pray? How have these prayers been answered?
2. **25:27–28.** Consciously or not, parents may prefer the personal or temperamental traits of one child over those of another. What dangers do such preferences pose for relationships within the family? What can parents do to minimize “favorite child” preferences?
3. **25:29–34.** In this episode, the rivalry between siblings in a seemingly trivial matter reveals traits that will mature later on. What is your experience of youthful contests among siblings? Have these contests revealed character traits that became settled as the children matured?

Chapters 26–27

For understanding

1. **26:5.** What were the covenant benefits promised to Abraham, and why were they given? What does God mean by “my charge, my commandments, my statutes”?
2. **27:1–46.** In this chapter, what does Jacob do, and what is Rebekah's role? What is the attitude of the Genesis account toward Esau? What is the story intended to illustrate?
3. **27:13.** What price does Rebekah pay for her role in this story?
4. **27:29.** What does Isaac's blessing envision? When is the prophecy fulfilled?

For application

1. **26:14.** What is envy? Why is it described in the Catechism as one of the “capital sins” (CCC 2538–40)? How has envy affected your own life?
2. **26:17–22.** What do you think of Isaac's way of handling this situation? How would you deal with persons who took credit for—or even took over—your efforts? Which approach, yours or Isaac's, seems better able to achieve the Lord's designs for your life?
3. **27:5–19.** Who do you think bears the greater guilt for the deception of Isaac: Rebekah, who instigates the deception, or Isaac, who cooperates in it? What moral effect does deceiving others have on the deceiver?
4. **27:33–41.** Disputes over an inheritance often leave permanent scars on family relationships. How has your family handled distribution of the estate of a family member who has died? What might be a Christian way of handling disputes over such things?

Chapter 28

For understanding

1. **28:12.** What kind of ladder does the Hebrew of this verse envision? Of what does the dream convince Jacob? How is Jacob's ladder a prophetic image of Christ?
2. **28:18.** Why does Jacob make a pillar of his stone headrest? What did Moses later instruct Israel to do with certain pillars?
3. **28:21.** Why is Jacob's vow to God conditional? What is Jacob thus doing with the Lord?

For application

1. **28:1–2.** Parents today seldom determine whom their children will marry—or even whether they will. Since a child's choice of a partner affects the entire family, do you think parents should have some say in the matter? What should the parents do if they disapprove of the child's choice, especially if they disapprove on religious or moral grounds?
2. **28:3–4.** In some families, the parents occasionally bless their children, e.g., before sending them out of the house. Are you familiar with this practice? What benefits do you see in it for both the parents and the children?

3. **28:16–17.** Not uncommonly, people have an almost physical sense of the presence of God in certain locations, such as in a particular church or in a forest. How and where have you experienced God's presence? What has been the religious or moral effect on you?
4. **28:20–22.** What is a vow? (Compare your answer with CCC 2102.) When might it be inappropriate for a vow to be conditional, as Jacob's was? How important is it to keep a vow made privately?

Chapter 29

For understanding

1. **29:1–30.** What does divine Providence arrange for Jacob in the first of these two episodes? What happens to him in the second?
2. **29:16.** What do the names Leah and Rachel mean in Hebrew? What does their destiny of being married to the same man force the sisters to do?
3. **29:25.** How could Jacob have been deceived as to the identity of his bride? How is his blindness a just penalty for Jacob? What does Laban's trickery regarding the first-born sister recall about Jacob's own trickery?
4. **29:31.** What does it mean that Leah was "hated"? What might Leah's pregnancy indicate about Jacob's preferential love for Rachel?

For application

1. **29:10–12.** Family stories of how spouses met can sometimes hold lessons about God's provision for the family. What stories circulate in your family, and what can you learn from them about God providence?
2. **29:16–17.** Although physical good looks may initially attract, what characteristics should ultimately determine one's choice of a marriage partner? What qualities would you look for, and why?
3. **29:23–30.** Despite Laban's deception, Jacob fulfills his end of the service agreement. What obligation would you feel to complete an agreement if the other party had taken advantage of you on a technicality?
4. **29:31.** What pressures might the inability to conceive have on a marriage? What are some Christian ways of reducing these pressures or resolving these difficulties?

Chapter 30

For understanding

1. **29:32—30:24.** What kind of wordplay do the names of Jacob's sons involve? What do their various names mean? When and where was Benjamin born?
2. **30:3.** To what ancient rite does the expression "bear [a child] upon my knees" refer?
3. **30:14.** What is the significance of mandrakes? What is the irony in this passage?
4. **30:27.** What is divination? What is Scripture's judgment about it?
5. **30:37–43.** What was the belief of ancient herdsman about visual stimuli in the breeding of animals? How does Jacob act on this belief?

For application

1. **30:1–24.** In the context of their marriage to Jacob, why are Leah and Rachel locked in such a bitter contest to have children? Might such a rivalry between sisters occur even today? From which of the seven capital sins might such a rivalry stem?
2. **30:1–24.** What do you think of Jacob's role in this contest? How might his acquiescence contribute to the sisters' rivalry? How might a modern husband support his wife when she is distraught over infertility?
3. **30:31–36.** How does Laban try to ensure that he gets the better of Jacob in this agreement? If you were an employer, how would you determine an employee's wage so that you could still make a profit without cheating the employee?
4. **30:37–43.** Jacob retaliates by using his knowledge of animal husbandry to get himself the wage he was promised while minimizing the increase of Laban's wealth. How justified is Jacob in using this stratagem? Why is it inappropriate to cheat someone who has cheated you?

Chapter 31

For understanding

1. **31:1–16.** What does the preceding narrative in chap. 30 highlight? Why is the story retold in the current chapter?
2. **31:39.** In the ancient Near East, what obligations did a shepherd have to his employer if an animal was stolen or mauled by wild beasts? How did Jacob go beyond the call of duty?
3. **31:43–55.** What do Jacob and Laban do to seal their covenant? What do they pledge? Why were covenants of this type made?
4. **31:47.** Why do Laban and Jacob call the same location by different names? What does the bilingual tradition mirror?

For application

1. **31:14–16.** Childhood grievances against parents often carry over into adulthood. Have you held grievances against your parents? What Christian virtues can help minimize or eliminate such grievances?
2. **31:19.** Not every child who leaves home steals from his parents, but everyone does take something of value when he leaves. Assuming you have left your parental home, what have you taken with you? Of what value is it to you? to your parents?
3. **31:20.** Review Jacob's motives in vv. 1–20 for fleeing Laban's service. What are they? As you reflect on your departure from your parental home, what were your motives? How mixed were they? Which were real, and which may have been rationalizations?
4. **31:36.** Have you ever been unjustly accused? How did you respond to the accusation? Given the example of Jesus at his various trials, how should you have responded?

Chapter 32

For understanding

1. **32:4.** What do the titles that Jacob is using imply with regard to Esau? In effect, what is Jacob doing? What does this strategy accomplish?
2. **32:22–32.** What is the outcome of this mysterious wrestling match? Allegorically, what does the defeat of the angel represent? How does this interpretation apply to the people of Israel? On a moral level, what does it mean to wrestle with an angel?
3. **Word Study: Israel (32:28).** What is the wordplay involved in the name Israel? What is unusual about the compound character of this name? What is the name taken to mean in Scripture? In later biblical history, for what group does the name stand?
4. **32:30.** How does Jacob see God "face to face"? What does the name Peniel mean, and where was it located?

For application

1. **32:7–12.** How does Jacob manage his fear and distress at the approach of Esau? How do you typically handle fear? How does or could prayer enter into the way you handle fear?
2. **32:12–13.** Reflect on Jesus' exhortation in Mt 25–34 and the parallel passage in Lk 12:22–31. How much confidence do you place in God's promises in Scripture when you feel that your welfare is threatened? How readily, for example, do such promises even come to mind in times of anxiety?
3. **32:24–26.** The Catechism calls conversion a struggle (CCC 1426) and prayer a battle (CCC 2573ff.). In what ways are they a struggle and a battle for you? How like Jacob are you in continuing the struggle?
4. **32:28.** Through his struggle with God, Jacob "prevails." In prayer of petition, what changes: God's mind or man's? What does it mean to "prevail" in prayer?

Chapters 33–34

For understanding

1. **33:18.** Where is Shechem? After whom is it named? What route is Jacob following?
2. **34:1–31.** With what does this chapter deal? What is Jacob's role in this episode?

3. **34:9.** What is Hamor negotiating between Israel and Shechem? What is in it for the citizens of Shechem? How do Jacob's sons react?
4. **34:15.** What is the condition for marital unions between Israel and Shechem? What do Jacob's sons intend by proposing it?

For application

1. **33:12–15.** Jacob's demurrals and his subsequent actions suggest that he does not fully trust his brother, even though the two are apparently reconciled. When trust is broken, how can it be rebuilt? How would you know when trust had been firmly reestablished?
2. **34:1–2.** The word "rape" comes from a Latin word meaning "to steal" by force. When a rape occurs, what is stolen? Compare your answer with that of the Catechism (CCC 2256).
3. **34:25–27.** Dinah's brothers take revenge by killing all the males in the city of Shechem and reclaiming their sister. In your area, what is the legal punishment for the crime of rape? In comparison with the revenge taken by Jacob's sons, do you think the modern legal punishment is adequate? What purpose should punishment for such a crime serve?
4. **34:30–31.** Jacob's sons dismiss their father's claim that their actions have brought disgrace and danger upon him. What impact does the crime of rape have on the family of the victim? on that of the perpetrator?

Chapter 35

For understanding

1. **35:9–12.** What happens with Jacob at Bethel? How do the words spoken to Jacob parallel the divine discourse with Abraham in chap. 17?
2. **35:18.** How does Rachel die? What is the meaning of the name she gives her infant? What is the meaning of the name Jacob gives him? How does this name bring out what is unique in the child? What do later biblical narratives indicate about the tribe of Benjamin?
3. **35:22.** What is Reuben attempting by lying with Bilhah? What irony results from it? What will Jacob do with Reuben's birthright?
4. **35:29.** What impression is created by placing the story of Isaac's death here? Where else might it have been placed? What other story of a burial by feuding brothers does this one recall?

For application

1. **35:4.** Many people — perhaps you yourself — possess images or wear jewelry that are actually emblems of other religions, such as a bracelet charm or a garden statue of Buddha. What might be a danger, even in modern America, of possessing or wearing such images? What does the Catechism say about images of God? Compare your answer with that of the Catechism (CCC 476, 1159–62).
2. **35:11–12.** Why do you think God repeats the covenant promises to succeeding generations of patriarchs? Why do you think we need to hear promises repeated?
3. **35:17–20.** Why do families create burial markers, even if they have no intention of returning to the burial site? What do such markers indicate about those who are still alive?
4. **35:22–25.** Review the note for v. 22. With Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, dead, why is Bilhah so important to Reuben? If you wanted access to a famous person, but that person was inaccessible, to whom would you go?

Chapters 36–37

For understanding

1. **36:7.** What forces Jacob and Esau to separate their tribes? Why is the parallel with Abraham and Lot significant?
2. **37:1—50:26.** To what is this storyline devoted? What is the link between this material and that of the book of Exodus? What in this material has been verified as historically authentic?
3. **37:3.** What does Jacob's preferential love for Joseph do to his family? What is the significance of the robe Jacob gives Joseph? What is its allegorical significance?
4. **Word Study: Dream (37:5).** What did people in the ancient Near East believe about dreams? In the biblical tradition, why are dreams important? What does the Lord reveal through them? What role do they play in the life of Joseph?

5. **37:28.** Who are the Midianite traders? Does the sum of 20 shekels of silver, paid for Joseph as a slave accord with historical evidence for the price of slaves during that period? When did the price climb to 30 silver pieces?

For application

1. **37:3–4.** In a family with several children, how can the parents avoid showing favoritism? Why is such avoidance necessary?
2. **37:5–11.** In a family with several children, how do children tend to assert their own importance? In this passage, how does Jacob respond to his son? How should a modern parent respond?
3. **37:19–27.** In a family with several children, fraternal envy of a promising sibling may play out in a variety of ways behind the backs of the parents. Have you ever had experience of this sort of retaliation against a favored sibling? How has age or experience changed or confirmed the attitudes of other siblings (including yourself, if applicable)?
4. **37:34–35.** In comparison with Jacob's expression of grief over the loss of a child, what attitude should a Christian parent display?

Chapter 38

For understanding

1. **38:1–30.** On whom is the spotlight in this chapter? What does the story hint, and what does it explain?
2. **38:8.** To what "duty" is Judah referring here? When was this duty made into law?
3. **38:9.** In addition to interrupting sexual intercourse, what else made Onan's sin so gravely displeasing to the Lord? What is the twofold reason for the seriousness of what he did? In its codified form, what is the usual punishment for violation of the levirate law in Scripture? In Catholic moral theology, what does the sin of "Onanism" cover?
4. **38:21.** What is the meaning of the Hebrew word used in this verse? What does the shift in terminology suggest?
5. **38:26.** What is Judah's point in saying that Tamar is "more righteous" than he?

For application

1. **38:2.** Read the note for this verse. What standards have your parents had regarding their children's selection of a marriage partner? What role has religion played in those standards? What role should it play?
2. **38:9.** According to Catholic Church teaching, "each and every marriage act must remain open to the transmission of life" (*Humanae Vitae* II). What are some reasons modern couples give for wishing to avoid or delay having children? Which means of regulating births are morally acceptable, and which are not? What makes contraception inherently contradictory to the marriage covenant? (Refer to CCC 2368–71.)
3. **38:13–19.** What is Tamar trying to accomplish by her actions with Judah? Given the levirate custom of the time, how justified is she in taking matters into her own hands?

Chapters 39–40

For understanding

1. **39:4.** What does authority over Potiphar's palace and possessions anticipate?
2. **39:6–18.** How does Joseph resist the advances of Potiphar's wife? Aware of his own weakness, what does he refuse and what does he avoid?
3. **39:20.** Why is prison a mild punishment for Joseph?
4. **40:13.** What is the meaning of this wordplay for the butler? for the baker?

For application

1. **39:7–12.** Have you ever dealt with sexual temptation? What have such temptations taught you about yourself? Why might it be better to flee from such a temptation than to fight it?
2. **39:21–23.** What talents or skills do you have that have brought you success over the long run, despite setbacks? Might the Lord be responsive to them? To whom do you generally give credit for them?
3. **40:8.** Despite the Church's condemnation, many Christians still practice some form of divination, such as consulting horoscopes. What is the difference between using divination to interpret dreams and the way Joseph interprets them? Why does the Church condemn practices such as divination? (Refer to CCC 2116.) What harm can they do to the person who uses them?

Chapter 41

For understanding

1. **41:1–57.** How does God arrange for Joseph's elevation to royal power in Egypt? What are some of the parallels between this chapter and chap. 2 of the Book of Daniel?
2. **41:39–44.** As vizier of Egypt, what authority does Joseph have? What do the symbols of his office signify? In addition to Egypt, what other Near Eastern countries recognized the position of vizier?
3. **41:45.** What are the meanings of some of the Egyptian names in this verse? What was the Greek name for the city of On, and for what was it famous? What does Joseph's marriage into the priestly caste mean?

For application

1. **41:8.** Whenever you have a significant personal or spiritual problem, how do you seek resolution? To whom do you turn for help? How willing are you to take the advice that is offered?
2. **41:14.** Of what importance is it to appear clean and well dressed in the presence of important officials? What do you think explains the current trend to appear in casual or worn attire in the presence of God in the liturgy? How would you rate your own dress when you attend the liturgy?
3. **41:16.** The Catechism discusses charismatic gifts as ways by which the Holy Spirit "makes the faithful 'fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church' [Lumen Gentium 12 §2]" (CCC 798). What charisms has the Holy Spirit given you for that purpose? How do you recognize them?
4. **41:47–57.** Because the spiritual life alternates between spiritual "uptimes" and "downtimes", how should you prepare yourself spiritually for the periods of dryness and desolation that tend to follow periods of growth and consolation? For example, which spiritual practices should you strengthen, and which should you begin that you have not yet undertaken?

Chapters 42–44

For understanding

1. **42:34.** What threat and what promise do Joseph's brothers hide from Jacob?
2. **43:32.** Why was there separate seating arrangements at this meal? Why did Egyptians refuse table-fellowship with Hebrews? What other references in the Pentateuch support this interpretation?
3. **44:5.** How was a drinking cup used for divination? What indication do we have that Joseph practiced these superstitious arts?
4. **44:16.** About what guilt is Judah speaking in his reply to Joseph? What is the irony here?

For application

1. **42:28.** When a disaster strikes, particularly one that claims many lives, where do people tend to lay the blame? What challenges to faith can such disasters pose? What answers should faith give to these challenges?
2. **43:1–14.** How true is the saying, "Not to decide is to decide"? Have you ever put off making a vital decision out of fear of the consequences? What were your reasons? What finally brought about a decision?
3. **44:1–13.** After having treated Benjamin with such elaborate kindness at the feast in chap. 43, Joseph stages a trick that puts the blame on Benjamin for theft, the penalty for which is slavery in Egypt. What do you think is Joseph's motive? What "message" may he be sending to Benjamin's brothers? How might this message be related to what happened to Joseph himself?

Chapter 45

For understanding

1. **45:5.** What do Joseph's words to his brothers imply about his attitude and intention? How does Joseph interpret his rejection by his brothers? What theological lesson is contained here? What comparison between Jesus and Joseph does Stephen imply in his defense speech in Acts?
2. **45:10.** Where is Goshen? For what was the land ideally suited?
3. **45:24.** About what does Joseph admonish his brothers not to quarrel as they journey home?

For application

1. **45:4.** Pope John XXIII, whose given name was Giuseppe (Joseph), greeted a delegation of Jews at the Vatican by quoting this verse. What do you think he meant to tell them? How are Christians, in the words of Pius XI, “spiritually Semites”?
2. **45:7–8.** Can you think of other incidents in history where God brought good out of evil? How might a setback or disaster in your own life have been a blessing in disguise?
3. **45:24.** Read the note for this verse. Why would Joseph suspect that his brothers might quarrel after such good fortune? What might be the motives for such quarreling?

Chapter 46

For understanding

1. **46:1–4.** Why is this appearance of Yahweh to Jacob important? How long will it be before another Israelite encounters the presence of God in this way? What does the promise made to Jacob on this occasion recall?
2. **46:8–27.** In this inventory of the family of Jacob in Egypt, how many descendants does the Hebrew text count? Of what is that number reminiscent? How does the Greek OT expand that list, and which tradition does Stephen follow in the NT?
3. **46:8.** Around what year does a literal reading of biblical chronology place the beginning of the sojourn in Egypt?
4. **46:34.** Why is “every shepherd an abomination” to Egyptians? Of what were some herding and grazing animals a symbol, and what aspects of shepherding made that profession represent a profanation of their religion?

For application

1. **46:5–7.** How often has your family made a major move from one location to another? What was the occasion of each move, and how difficult was it? What have been the long-term effects of the moves on your family?
2. **46:8–27.** Genealogies occur frequently in Scripture. How well do you know the genealogy of your own family? Of what importance to you is it to know who your ancestors were, where they came from, and what kind of people they were?
3. **46:32–34.** Do you regard your occupation as a vocation, as a career, or as a job? What is the difference? How did you select your occupation, and how do you feel about it? How can you use it to honor the Lord?

Chapter 47

For understanding

1. **47:9.** What does Jacob mean by “my sojourning”? What is his point?
2. **47:11.** For what is Rameses another name in this verse? Who updated that name? When did the region’s namesake actually reign?
3. **47:13–26.** How do the Egyptians fare as the famine grinds on? Who steers them through the crisis? What impression is given in 47:27 about Israel?
4. **47:27.** How is the name Israel used here for the first time in Scripture? How are the promises of God to Abraham and Isaac fulfilled here?

For application

1. **47:12–13.** Care for an aged parent or disabled relative is not a single-event situation; rather, it is ongoing, often for years. What is involved in such care? What effects does ongoing care have on the caregiver and the caregiver’s family? How does such care reflect obedience to the fourth commandment?
2. **47:13–26.** Joseph’s rationing policy involves selling grain to the Egyptians or bartering for their service rather than giving grain to them. Considering its effects on the populace, what do you think of the policy? How might a modern government handle a similar food emergency?
3. **47:29–30.** What do you think are Jacob’s reasons for wanting to be buried, not in Egypt, but with his fathers? Why is the place of burial significant? What religious importance might the place of burial have?

Chapter 48

For understanding

1. **Topical Essay: Blessings and Birthrights.** What distinct pattern emerges in Genesis that tends to run counter to the domestic customs of the biblical world? What were some privileges that first-born sons typically had? Who were

the only first-born sons in Genesis to receive the customary blessings? Why did most first-borns lose their positions? How often does the pattern of God's preference for younger sons repeat itself, and who benefits?

2. **48:1–22.** What is the blind and bedridden Jacob doing in this chapter? What is its significance for Joseph's sons? What blessing is given to Ephraim, the youngest?
3. **48:5.** How did Reuben and Simeon disqualify themselves from receiving the blessing of the first-born? Who takes their places?
4. **48:22.** What is the Hebrew wordplay on the term translated "mountain slope"? Where is the city of Shechem located? What is its connection with Joseph?

For application

1. **48:1–2.** When notified that a parent is dying, children will often rush to be present before death occurs, even if the parent is not conscious. What are some of the reasons why they might feel compelled to come? What religious motives might prompt them, even if they are not religious themselves?
2. **48:3–4.** Jacob reminds Joseph of God's covenant promises to him. What makes the last words of a dying person important to those left behind? What are the reported or actual last words of people you have known or read about that have impressed you the most? What makes them memorable?
3. **48:15–16.** Jacob's blessing seems to pass on to Ephraim and Manasseh the blessings he has received from God. If you had a blessing to pass on to loved ones, what would it be?

Chapter 49

For understanding

1. **49:1–27.** What sort of benedictions are the blessings that Jacob gives his sons? How are they grouped? How are the blessings given to Judah and Joseph different from the others?
2. **49:5–7.** What does Jacob have to say about Simeon and Levi? What does the oracle foresee about their tribes?
3. **49:8–12.** What is the destiny of the tribe of Judah? How is Judah portrayed? Where else in the OT do allusions to this blessing appear?
4. **49:10.** Who fulfills the oracle of an international ruler from the line of Judah? When does its ultimate fulfillment come?
5. **49:11.** What is the "blood of grapes"? What idea does it convey? Allegorically, to what do the wine stains point?
6. **49:24.** What do the two titles for Yahweh celebrate?

For application

1. **49:3–27.** The attitude of parents toward their children can indicate for good or ill the kinds of persons their children will become. In what ways have the attitudes of your parents determined the course of your life so far? Have you consciously or unconsciously resisted your parents' expectations for your life? If you are a parent, have you passed on such attitudes to your children?
2. **49:9.** Jesus is described in Rev 5:5 as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. What leonine traits does Jesus have? How is this an apt description of him?
3. **49:11.** Read the note for this verse. What connection do you see between the expression "blood of the grape" and the cup of the Eucharist?

Chapter 50

For understanding

1. **50:2.** What was Egyptian embalming? What did the process involve?
2. **50:10.** What was a threshing floor? To what direction does "beyond the Jordan" refer?
3. **50:25.** When was Joseph's request to carry his bones out of Egypt fulfilled? Where did the Israelites bury them?

For application

1. **50:7–13.** Aside from burying a deceased person, what is the purpose of a funeral? Why does the funeral liturgy of the Church include such elements as draping the casket with a pall, incensing it, and sprinkling holy water on it?

Genesis

2. **50:20–21.** Read carefully Joseph’s reply to his brothers’ plea for forgiveness. What does he say about his brothers’ transgression? In what way might his reply serve as a model of true forgiveness?
3. **50:24–25.** In the OT, the prediction of a “visitation” by God may be either a promise or a threat, depending on the circumstances. Which is Joseph predicting? Have you personally experienced such a “visit” by God? How would you characterize the experience?