

# Through The Bible In One Year

## The Adventure of Many Lifetimes

Unpublished Work, December 2005, David W. Shockey.

## Daily Devotional Companion

### Week 2

**Day 8.** Read Genesis 18.20-19.38; Matthew 6.25-7.14;  
Psalm 8; Proverbs 2.6-15.

### Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Genesis:** Praying for another, called interceding, is loving selflessly, just as Christ loves. Abraham intercedes with God for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, sinful as they were, pleading for God to spare the cities if only ten righteous people might be found in them. God's heart is to spare everyone in the world for the sake of just one righteous person, his Son, Jesus Christ, if only they will believe in him and accept the gift. **Questions:** 1. Whom has God put in my life that I need to pray for and intercede with God for? For what do I need to pray for them? If you aren't sure, try just asking them. Most likely, they'll appreciate it.. 2. Lot hesitates to flee from destruction, and his wife looks back as they are going, with disastrous results. Why do I hesitate to make changes that will make life better? What changes do I need to make now that will help me to have the abundant life God wants me to enjoy?

**Matthew:** Jesus says we are not to worry. Worry has its source in trying to control our own lives and assure that everything is perfect—a task far beyond our abilities. Ultimately, worry is not trusting God—trust means giving up our pretensions to be gods ourselves, and let God be God in our lives. Jesus promises “Ask, and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and it will be opened to you” because of who God is: totally loving, and totally trustworthy”. **Questions:** 1. Why is it so hard to let God be God, instead of trying to control my own life and destiny myself? In what areas of my life now am I worrying most? Ask God for the power to let go and let him be God over those areas today. 2. Jesus says not to judge (condemn) others, knowing our fallen human nature's tendency of comparing ourselves with others and always finding fault, however petty, while ignoring our own failings and limitations. Who am I most critical of in my life today? How do I share the same faults? What trusted spiritual friend can I approach to ask humbly what my own faults are, so I can see better my own spiritual state? If you don't have such a faith friend, who could you begin to cultivate as such a spiritual friend?

**Prayer:** Dear God, close my eyes to the faults of others, even as I would have you close your eyes and forgive mine. Open my eyes to my own shortcomings, as you know best, so in my weakness, I will not become discouraged and despair of ever being the way you created and redeemed me to become. Forgive my incessant comparing and criticizing of others, and increase my compassion and patience for others, even as you are so

compassionate and patient towards me, in Christ your Son. Amen

## **Day 9.** Read Genesis 20.1-22.24; Matthew 7.15-29; Psalm 9.1-12; Proverbs 2.16-22

### **Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:**

**Genesis:** Abraham resorts to lies and deceptions, and in so doing risks upsetting God's whole plan to redeem the world, which includes that he and Sarah are to have the child of promise. And yet, when God asks him to sacrifice the child of promise, Isaac, he immediately sets about obeying. **Questions:** 1. Why does Abraham resort to lies and deceptions? Where in my life today do I tend to not tell the truth in order to protect myself? Who is God calling me to share my faith with so they can have life with God? 2. Why does Abraham "change his tune" and obey God when he calls him to sacrifice Isaac? Special Note: God provides a substitute sacrifice to take Isaac's place. God isn't interested in our trying to offer him anything-even our very lives-to receive forgiveness and eternal life. He has provided the sacrifice-his Son, Jesus Christ. Why do I worry about whether I am good enough, or have done enough, when I can't earn salvation anyway, even I lived a thousand lifetimes for God? Why is it so hard to accept that God loves me, just as I am, and to revel in his unmerited love for me in Christ? How will accepting that God loves me totally, knows best and wants the best for me, help me to let God control my choices and actions in life, as Abraham did finally?

**Matthew:** Jesus says sobering words that "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven." The redemption we have as a gift through the death and resurrection of Jesus captures our whole being, heart, mind, strength and soul. God loves us as we are, and loves us too much to leave us as we are. His love transforms us to be like his Son. Living faith is active in love. So Jesus adds "but only he who does the will of my Father in heaven." Jesus compares people who hear and do his words- whose faith is active in love (serving deeds and inviting words)- to a person who builds his house on a firm foundation. **Questions:** 1. In what area of my life are my actions lagging behind my faith? 2. On what besides the Word of God do I sometimes seek to base my decisions and actions? My own desires? My fears? Keeping up with others? Social conventions and customs? The opinions of others? 2. How can I make my foundation in God's Word stronger? What is God calling me to do today, to put into practice what he has shown me today?

**Prayer:** God, I try to build my hope and confidence on other things than you and your Word. Why do I resort to all types of evasions and games to protect myself? Why prop up the illusions I project to others of being in control and being self-sufficient? It is faithlessness, I know. Help me truly believe that your love for me is sufficient, and your almighty power more than sufficient, to lead me to life abundant with you. Let me not loiter at the starting line. Let me not be just a hearer, but a doer, of your life-giving Word. Lead me on to become whom I already am in your eyes and by your grace, your precious child, just like Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.

**Day 10.** Read Genesis 23.1-24.51; Matthew 8.1-17;  
Psalm 9.13-20; Proverbs 3.1-6

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Genesis:** Abraham seeks to assure his son, Isaac, that he will find a wife that is pleasing to God; and, because Abraham gives the control to God, God miraculously arranges events to create a match literally “made in heaven” for Isaac. Is it just an accident that the first woman the servant meets fulfills the sign the servant asked of God to assure she is the one he is seeking? Many who bear the name of Christ are really partial, practical atheists. In actual fact, all of us are some of the time, and most of us are much of the time. We will let God be in control much of the time, except at the most important decisions (like the choice of our spouse, and except when it is inconvenient (like how we spend our discretionary money). **Questions:** 1. Why is it so hard for me to believe that God is interested in every aspect of my life, down to the smallest detail? 2. What details-or important decisions-do I have in my life right now that I need to seek God-pleasing choices or changes in?

**Matthew:** People turned to Jesus for healing and wholeness. Wholeness-which is what salvation ultimately, signifies-means the healing of every aspect of lives: spiritual, physical, social and communal. Jesus heals a leper, who is an outcast from society, and the servant of a Roman centurion-one of the foreign conquerors and occupiers. Of the centurion's words, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word and my servant will be healed” Jesus responds, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith!” Everyone who longs for wholeness and accepts it as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ is acceptable to God-however broken or far from God and in need of wholeness they (or we) may be. **Questions:** 1. Where am I broken and in need of wholeness? 2. Who do I know who is hurting or broken? How can I be God’s instrument of healing and wholeness for them? 3. Who are the “lepers” (outcasts) in my neighborhood, workplace, and community today? How can I show them God’s caring in practical ways that demonstrate God’s love for them?

**Prayer:** God, it is so difficult to believe that you love me so much you care about every detail in my life, not just the most important decisions. Help me to believe and live accordingly, asking in every moment that your will be done and not mine. Especially, Lord, help me be aware moment by moment of the others around me who are broken, hurting and in need of wholeness. Let your Holy Spirit and power work in me and through me to be your instrument of healing and wholeness wherever you lead me this day, and every day. Amen.

**Day 11.** Read Genesis 24.52-26.16; Matthew 8.18-34;  
Psalm 10.1-15; Proverbs 3.7-8

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Genesis:** “These are the names of the sons of Ishmael...” Genesis says “And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers.” (25.13, 18) The hostility between Arab and Jew, though they are all related to one another as children of Abraham, goes back to ancient times and continues today. But the story grows even darker, within the chosen people themselves. Isaac, the child of promise, has two sons, the oldest of whom he favors, the youngest whom Rebecca favors. The family is torn by favoritism, intrigue, lies and deception. Jacob, the younger son, takes his older brother, Esau’s, birthright for a bowl of soup when he is famished. **Questions:** 1. What family strifes and divisions were there in my family when I was growing up? What ones exist today? 2. How do I show favoritism in my family? Among friends and acquaintances? Neighbors? My fellow workers on the job? 3. What do you think the Bible means when it says repeatedly that God is not a “respector of persons?” 4. Does my church show favoritism toward some, or exclude some? What can I do about that?

**Matthew:** Jesus extends calls to many, but few come, because the way he leads is hard. When he and his disciples travel in a boat, a savage storm arises. Jesus sleeps peacefully in the back while they fight the wind and waves. They wake him, and Jesus stills the storm. Then he turns to the storm inside; “You of little faith, why were you so afraid?” Jesus can still even the most savage storms, the ones inside us- fear and disbelief. **Questions:** 1. What stormy areas in my life right now need the touch of Jesus? 2. In what areas in my life, and in my following of Jesus, am I “of little faith?” 3. How can I “wake” Jesus so he stills the storms and increases my faith?

**Prayer:** Oh God, our loving Father, you want us to be one with each other, even as we would be one with you. Forgive me for favoring some people, and forgetting others. Usually it’s people different from me, people I don’t get along with, people I dislike or fear or simply don’t understand, that I ignore, avoid, criticize or condemn. The divisions run deep, dividing family, workplace, neighborhood, even your church. Still the storms of fear and disbelief that cause the rifts between us. As you have reconciled me to you in Christ, let me become an instrument of reconciliation with everyone around me. Amen.

**Day 12.** Read Genesis 26.17-27.46; Matthew 9.1-17;  
Psalm 10.16-17; Proverbs 3.9-10.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Genesis:** Water is precious in the arid Middle East. A well Isaac digs produces abundant water, which might remind us of the promise of Jesus: “Out of the believer’s heart will flow rivers of living water (meaning the Spirit).” Isaac’s jealous neighbors take the wells by force. Isaac keeps digging new wells, which flow with water. His wealth leads to conflict with the king of the country. But a worse conflict comes from within his own family. Having bargained his brother out of his birthright, Jacob now deceives his father and steals. Blessed by God, Isaac must deal with jealous neighbors. Angry and vengeful, Esau promises to kill his brother after his father is dead. **Questions:** 1. Where am I jealous of others whom God is blessing? How does that affect my fruitfulness for God? My church? Other churches and our witness to the community around us? 2. How full is my own “well” of faith and love right now? Overflowing? Filling up? Drying up? Bone dry? 3. Do I need to dig a well in a new location? What could I change, in order to draw

more deeply on God's Spirit and life?.

**Matthew:** Tax collectors worked for the Roman conquerors, were marginally honest at best, and were widely hated because of it. Jesus calls Matthew the tax collector to be one of the Twelve to follow him and know him intimately. Matthew's response? He throws a party, inviting his friends-tax collectors and notorious "sinners" like himself-so they can meet Jesus, too. Everyone is welcome with Jesus. Except...the people who won't accept others. "Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" Jesus says.

**Questions:** 1. Who do I find unacceptable? 2. Who do I need to help come to know Jesus? How can I throw a "Matthew Party," inviting them to some event along with other believers I know, so they can begin to form relationships with others in whom Christ lives?

**Prayer:** O Lord, if it's up to me alone, my "well" will be cracked and dry always. Yet you call me, like you did Matthew, to know and walk with you. Such love is like water in the desert of my life. Let me always drink deeply of your gracious love for me. And, Lord, use me as your well to give the water of life to others. Fill me so I overflow with your presence, and the power of your forgiving love, for everyone around me. Open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, my hands to help, and my words to reach those around me who need you, my Lord Christ.. Amen.

**Day 13.** Read Genesis 28.1-29.35; Matthew 9.18-38;  
Psalm 11.1-7; Proverbs 3.11-12

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Genesis:** Fleeing from home and the vengeful brother he cheated, Jacob rests on his journey only to dream of a stairway reaching to heaven. In the dream, the Lord renews the promise of Abraham to Jacob that all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through him, and that God himself will watch over him. Jacob responds that if the Lord will keep his promise, then he will take the Lord as his God, and return a tenth of all the blessings to God. Jacob, the swindler, is tricked by his own uncle into marrying a daughter he did not love, and therefore into working fourteen years in order to marry Rachel, whom Jacob does love.. The seeds of jealousy and family division have been sown. **Questions:** 1. At what points of my life journey have I felt God's presence and caring for me most? 2. What great "surprises" have come in my life, that only later were shown to be "blessings in disguise?" 3. Who has wronged me in my journey? Whom have I wronged? How can we be reconciled?

**Matthew:** Jesus raises a dead child, heals a woman with a serious chronic illness that made her an outcast according to the religious rules of the society, and gives sight to two blind men after first asking them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" He casts out a demon and yet is accused by religious authorities that "it is by the prince of demons he drives out demons." He has compassion on all, which drives him to say, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest." **Questions:** 1. What do I believe Jesus is able to do in my life? Through my life? 2. What are my mission "fields?" Family? Fellow workers? Neighbors? Friends? Others? 3. Who specifically does God want to reach through me? What can I do this week to touch them for God?

**Prayer:** God, could it be that you truly care for me personally? Is it really true that I matter to you? That I am an important part of your plan and purpose to bless people with eternal life with you? Like Abraham and Jacob, Sarah and Rachel, do you intend to bless people through me, people only I can reach, but through them people all over the world? Your word says so. And yes, I believe it. I believe you can do it. Have your will and your way, Lord. Open my eyes to see, my ears to hear, my lips to speak, and my hands to help. Amen.

**Day 14.** Read Genesis 30.1-31.16; Matthew 10.1-25;  
Psalm 12.1-8; Proverbs 3.13-15.

## Thoughts & Questions For Reflection:

**Genesis:** Their longing for affection drives a divisive and destructive competition between Jacob's wives. Behind it is the assumption that the one who produces the most children will be most loved. Jacob's father-in-law begs him to stay because of the wealth he receives from him, essentially asking Jacob to "name your price." Before long, his brothers-in-law are grumbling that he has usurped their father's wealth. His father-in-law's attitude toward him sours. The discord he sowed in his own family with his own brother, comes back upon him. **Questions:** 1. How does my desire to please people, or earn people's love, skew my life and actions? What does it keep me from doing that I should do? 2. What acts have I committed, perhaps in order to know that I am loved, that "boomeranged" on me, proving "you reap what you sow?" 2. Is there a relationship in my life that has been turning sour lately? Why? 3. How can the cycle of wrong motivation, wrongdoing and ruined relationships be broken? How does faith in God help? How does forgiveness help?

**Matthew:** Because human need is so great, and because of his compassion for each person and all people, and because his Father has sent him, so Jesus sends out his disciples to do his work. They are to heal, to free people from bondage to the demons that disrupt their lives, and above all, to proclaim the good news that the Kingdom of God-God's loving rule-is available to all. They are to take nothing on the journey, but totally trust God to provide. Jesus predicts there will be rejection, even by people close to them. As people treated him, so will his followers be treated. **Questions:** 1. To whom is God sending me? 2. Why do I hesitate? 3. What rejection do I fear, and how does it affect my going for Jesus?

**Prayer:** God, I long so much to be loved. Sometimes, I do things in order to be loved. Sometimes I don't do things I should, in order not to risk losing love. Only your love can finally satisfy my all too human heart. Only your love can fully satisfy that longing ache inside. Help me to know- truly-that in your Son, Jesus Christ, I am loved endlessly and limitlessly. This divine love is the only love that can fill my inner abyss. It can even make the emptiness overflow with love for others. Help me to believe that you love me, and help me to live from that belief every day. Send me to share with others this love, and help them to know and believe your love for them. Then we shall be free from the endless and fruitless cycle of striving always to please others to secure love for ourselves. Amen.

Through The Bible In One Year: Week 2  
Sunday Worship Lessons

