SELAH

Five days in Genesis 24

A Family to Bless the Nations

MONDAY

BLESSED

TUESDAY

ANSWERED

WEDNESDAY

NOT ABANDONED

THURSDAY

LED

FRIDAY

SENT TO BLESS

You will be asked to write things down this week. A notebook works. So does the notes app on your phone.

NW Hills

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

SELAH

GOD'S FAMILY IS BLESSED.

MONDAY · Write your answers down

STOP

It is Monday, and the week has already started making demands of you. Before you answer any of them, stop. Nothing is going to fall apart in the next ten minutes. There is no email that cannot wait, no list that will not still be there. You are not behind. Sit down, put the phone face down unless you are writing on it, and let yourself be still in the presence of Jesus.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Start with your breath, because it is the one thing you can slow down on purpose. Take a few breaths deeper and longer than normal. Let your shoulders come down. If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

As you inhale, pray, "You have already been good to me…"

As you exhale, pray, "…help me see it."

LOOK

The Bible is not a book of advice. It is God telling us who he is and what he has done, and he gave it to us so we would not have to guess. This week we are sitting in one long chapter

where God never speaks out loud even once, and somehow everybody in it still ends up knowing he was there. Read these verses slowly, two times, before you go any further.

> *Abraham was now very old, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. He said to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac."*
>
> **Genesis 24:1–4 NIV**

ASK

God had blessed Abraham in every way. That is not Abraham's opinion of himself. That is the narrator, stating it as a fact, after twenty-four chapters of waiting.

> Read that carefully, because it is easy to hear wrong. Blessing in Genesis is not a scoreboard, and it never means a comfortable life. This same blessed man waited decades for a son, buried his wife three verses earlier, and in the very next breath runs into a problem all his money cannot fix. If your life does not look like Abraham's ledger, that is not a verdict on you and it is not a measure of how much God loves you.

- What has God already done for you that you would have to call blessing if you were honest about it?
- Does the word "blessed" ring true when you think about your own life right now? If it does not, what makes it hard to say?
- Abraham was blessed and still had a problem he could not solve. What is the thing in your life right now that no amount of resources will fix?

Write a short prayer thanking God for something specific he has already given you. Not something you are hoping for. Something you already have. Or, if you are having a hard time finding one, write a short prayer asking God to open your eyes

to what is already there.

HEAR

Now stop talking. Silence feels strange at first, and most of us fill it because we are in a hurry to check this off and get on with the day. Resist that for two minutes. You are probably not going to hear a voice. What usually comes is a thought that will not leave, a name, a picture, a verse. Whatever comes to mind, write it down.

SELAH

GOD'S FAMILY IS ANSWERED.

TUESDAY · Write your answers down

STOP

A day has gone by since you sat down here. Some of it went the way you wanted and some of it did not. Bring all of it in with you rather than leaving it at the door, because God is not waiting for you to arrive tidy. Take the time you need to settle before you start.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Breathe slowly again, the way you did yesterday. You do not have to make anything happen in this exercise. Breathing is the one part of your body that keeps working whether you are paying attention or not, which is a small picture of the thing we are about to read. If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out.

As you inhale, pray, "God, you hear me before I speak…"

As you exhale, pray, "…I will wait for you."

LOOK

These words have been read out loud for roughly three thousand years, by people in worse trouble than you are in and by people in better. They have outlasted every empire that tried to get rid of them. Give them your attention for a few

minutes. Read them slowly, two times.

> *Then he prayed, "LORD, God of my master Abraham, make me successful today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a young woman, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'—let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milkah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor.*
>
> **Genesis 24:12–15 NIV**

ASK

Before he had finished praying. The man's mouth was still moving and the answer was already walking up the road toward him. He was not even praying out loud. Later he tells the story and says he was praying in his heart.

> Here is what this passage is not. It is not a technique. The servant told God exactly what to do and God went along with it, and Scripture never once holds that up as a method for the rest of us. When God is gracious to somebody who does not know any better, that is kindness, not a set of instructions. And be careful of the trap on the other side of it: if you decide God only shows up in the dramatic answer, every ordinary day starts to feel like God saying no to you. He is not.

- What are you praying about right now that you have started to assume God is not listening to?
- This man prayed for his master, not for himself. Every time. Who could you pray for today who will never know you did it?
- What would change about your praying if you believed God heard you before you got the words out?

Write a short prayer for somebody else. Not for their sake and yours together. Just for theirs. Or, if you are struggling to believe God is listening at all, write a short prayer telling him that honestly.

HEAR

Sit quietly again. Your mind is going to wander, and that is not a failure. When you notice it has gone somewhere else, come back and start over without scolding yourself. Try praying one line and then stopping: “God, I am listening.” Whatever comes to mind, write it down.

SELAH

GOD'S FAMILY IS NOT ABANDONED.

WEDNESDAY · Write your answers down

STOP

You are three days in. This is usually the point where a practice like this can quietly turn into a task, something you do quickly so you can say you did it. Be intentional today. Slow down more than you think you need to. The point is not to finish the page.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Take a few long breaths before you read anything. Notice that you did not have to remind yourself to breathe all day, and yet here you are. Something has been keeping you going that you were not managing. If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out.

As you inhale, pray, "Your love has not let go…"

As you exhale, pray, "…and it will not today."

LOOK

This is a moment where somebody in the Bible finally sees what God has been doing the whole time, and the first thing he does is get on the ground. Watch what he says about God, and watch what he does not say about himself. Read it slowly, two times.

Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD, saying, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives."

Genesis 24:26–27 NIV

ASK

God has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to you. That word behind kindness is hesed, God's loyal love, one of the most frequently named things about him in the whole Old Testament. It means the way God keeps a promise he never had to make in the first place.

- Where in your life have you quietly assumed God gave up on you?
- The servant thanked God for faithfulness he had only just noticed, which had been running the whole time. What has God been doing for you that you are only now able to see?
- Loyal love means God stays when he does not have to. Does that ring true for you, or does it sound like something other people get?

Write a short prayer naming one thing God has not abandoned. A person, a promise, a part of you. Or, if you feel abandoned right now, write that down and tell him so plainly.

HEAR

Get quiet one more time. Some people find it easier to listen with their hands open in their lap, which sounds strange until you try it. It is a way of telling your own body that you are receiving rather than working. Whatever comes to mind, write it down.

SELAH

GOD'S FAMILY IS LED.

THURSDAY · Write your answers down

STOP

You are near the end of the week and you are probably tired. That is a fine thing to bring in here. Do not try to arrive at this page as a better version of yourself. Sit down as the person you actually are today and be still for a few minutes.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Let your breathing get slow before you read. There is no right way to do this and nothing to accomplish. If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, and let the count carry you.

As you inhale, pray, "Lord, you were ahead of me…"

As you exhale, pray, "…open my eyes to see."

LOOK

Yesterday you read a man worshiping the moment he understood. Today he is telling the story to strangers, out loud, and he still cannot get through it without saying what God did. Read it slowly, two times.

"and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master's

brother for his son. Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn."

Genesis 24:48–49 NIV

ASK

The LORD led me on the right road. He could not have said that while he was walking it. He could only say it looking back, standing in somebody's house, telling the story to people who had not been there.

> Do not turn this into a reason to feel guilty. The servant did not spot God's hand while it was happening. He was watching a woman carry water and quietly wondering whether it meant anything. If you have been missing it, that is not a failure of faith. That is what it is like to be a person walking forward through your own life, and it is exactly why looking back matters.

- Look back over the last year. Where can you now see a road you did not know you were being led down?
- Notice what he does the moment he finishes thanking God: he turns and asks somebody else for the same kindness he just received. Who needs that from you?
- What is the story you have never told anybody? Say why you have not told it.

Write down one thing God has done in your life that you have never said out loud to another person. Then write the name of somebody you could tell it to before Sunday.

HEAR

Be quiet and let God have the last word today rather than you. If your mind keeps going back to one thing, do not chase it away. That may be the point. Whatever comes to mind, write it down.

SELAH

GOD'S FAMILY IS SENT TO BLESS.

FRIDAY · Write your answers down

STOP

This is the last one. Before you rush it, look back at what you wrote on Monday. Take a minute with it. Then get still one more time, the way you have all week, and let the noise in your head settle before you go on.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Breathe slowly. You have done this four times already and it may be starting to feel ordinary, which is fitting for a week spent in a chapter about ordinary things. If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out.

As you inhale, pray, "Make me part of your promise…"

As you exhale, pray, "…to bless somebody today."

LOOK

Today we step back two chapters, to the mountain, to the words God swore to Abraham. When Rebekah left home, her family blessed her with almost the first half of this, without any idea what they were quoting. They never said the second half. Read both halves slowly, two times.

> *“I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”*
>
> **Genesis 22:17–18 NIV**

ASK

Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed. That is the sentence the whole story has been walking toward since the beginning. God has never blessed one family only for that family.

> Hear this as an invitation and not as a bill. You were not let into this promise because you earned a place, and being sent is not the rent you pay for being blessed. It is what being blessed turns into when it is working.

- Rebekah’s family prayed half a blessing over her and had no idea what the other half was. Where has God been doing more in your life than you knew to ask for?
- This week you read about a man praying for somebody else, a woman saying yes without the whole picture, and a household outside the family recognizing God anyway. Which of those three is God asking of you right now?
- Name one person, by name, who is not in God’s family yet. What is one ordinary thing you could do for them this week?

Write the name you just thought of. Then write a short prayer for them, and one sentence about what you are going to do.

HEAR

One last stretch of quiet. Do not go looking for something big. Most of what God does in a week like this one is small enough to miss and only makes sense later, which is the whole point of the chapter you have been living in. Whatever comes to mind, write it down.