

January Answers

- 1) [January 1] God is the **creator** of the universe. He has always existed, for He is **uncaused, eternal** and **transcendent**. The **Father** created the world through the **Son** (cf. John 1:3; Col 1:16), and the Holy **Spirit** was there, “hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2b). God’s **creativity** and **power** are revealed in each of the days of creation. God is also **omniscient** (all-knowing). He **foreknew** the fall of man before creation, and He planned to send the Son as a **sacrifice** for “the sins of the whole world” (Acts 2:22–23; 1 John 2:2).
- 2) [January 1] God **spoke** the universe into existence out of **nothing**. His creative activity took place during six 24-hour **days** and on the seventh day He rested. This example of **work** and **rest** was intended to be a **pattern** for us to follow (cf. Exod 16; 20:8–11). God made man and woman in His **image**, and they became the **model** for marriage. Sadly, the beauty of God’s “very good” creation was marred by two falls: the fall of **Satan** and the fall of **man**. Through one man, Adam, **sin** entered the world, and **death** through sin (Rom 5:12). The entire universe is now suffering the effects of mankind’s sin (Rom 8:22).
- 3) [January 2] After the fall, the world became very wicked. It began with **murder** and continued to deteriorate until the time of Noah when all men’s thoughts were “only **evil continually**” (Gen 6:5). As mankind spiraled toward destruction, God did His best to turn men from their evil ways. He personally warned **Cain** that sin was **crouching** at his door (Gen 4:7), and through **Enoch**, God warned of coming **judgment** (Gen 5:24; Jude 1:14–15). But men would not listen, and eventually their sin brought God’s **righteous** judgment. God destroyed the **entire** world with a flood and every living thing died. Only **Noah**, who walked with God, found favor in His eyes, and God saved him and his household in the ark.
- 4) [January 2] God’s **holiness** and justice are balanced beautifully with His patience and **love**. God hates sin, yet He continually reaches out to sinful man. God is a **personal** God, interested in having individual and intimate **fellowship** with us. He is also **faithful**, keeping His promises to us, just as He did to Noah. The world of today is very evil, but it’s not yet as bad as it was in Noah’s day. If God could help Noah remain **faithful** while surrounded by such wickedness, He can certainly help us to do the same. Sin is like a **beast**, crouching at our door. It wants to destroy us, but God is faithful to protect us.
- 5) [January 3] Noah’s first act after coming out of the ark was to build an **altar** and **worship** God for His mercy and faithfulness. This teaches us to always take **time** to praise God for His kindness and love. Evil was not destroyed by the flood. It lived on in the human **heart** and quickly inspired men to **rebel** against God. This can be seen in two ways: Ham’s behavior toward his father and the people’s refusal to fill the earth. First, Ham’s offense was not that he saw Noah naked, but that he neglected his **responsibility** to **cover** his father’s nakedness. This led Noah to utter the first recorded human **curse**. His words were a **prophecy** of divine judgment on **Canaan’s** descendants for their perversion, a perversion which was **foreshadowed** by Ham’s sin. This teaches us that we must never find secret **satisfaction** in the faults and failures of others. Instead, we should take **action** to cover, restore and heal. Second, the people’s offense was not that they wanted to build a city, but that they refused to **fill** the earth as God commanded. This led God to confuse their language and scatter them across the world. This teaches us that God **knows** best. In those times when we think our way is better, we must **submit** to God’s will and **obey** no matter the cost.

- 6) [January 4] Job lived a **blameless** life before God. This teaches us that we can do the same. Satan couldn't touch a hair on Job's head without God's **permission**. This shows us that we're **protected** at all times from the attacks of the enemy. Satan can only do what God **allows** him to do. Job worshipped God even after he **lost** everything, including his **children**. This teaches us that all we have is a **gift** from God, and that we're only a **steward** of God's possessions. Job was struck with a terrible sickness, yet he never cursed God for his suffering. This teaches us to **accept** the bad times as well as the good and to **wait** with patience for God's mercy and compassion (Jam 5:11). Above all, God wants to be loved and worshipped for **who** He is, not simply for what He has **given** us.
- 7) [January 5] Eliphaz said several things to Job that are true: those who "plow iniquity and sow trouble **reap** the same" (Job 4:8), God does bring **disaster** upon the wicked (Job 4:9), God does "catch the **wise** in their craftiness" (Job 5:13), we should be grateful when God **reproves** us, and we should not despise God's discipline (Job 5:17). However, Eliphaz also said some things that are false. He said the innocent never **perish** (Job 4:7), but sometimes they do (Gen 4:8). He said that a man cannot be **pure** before God (Job 4:17), but Job was (Job 1:8). He said the wicked never **flourish** (Job 5:1-7), but they often do (Ps 73:4-9). He said the righteous will be saved from all **trouble** (Job 5:19-27), but sometimes they aren't (1 Kgs 21:13). This shows us how important it is to **sift** what others say and discern whether or not their words are true.
- 8) [January 6] Bildad agreed with Eliphaz. He also believed that Job's suffering was because of some **sin** he had committed. Bildad then took the attack on Job to a new and vicious level, going so far as to say that Job's **children** got what they deserved (Job 8:4). Bildad was right in saying that God punishes sin, but he was wrong to **assume** that Job must have sinned to be suffering so intensely. Job affirmed God's sovereignty, but rather than being comforted by this, Job was **frightened** of God. He could not make sense of how God's goodness and justice were being worked out in his life. Today, Job introduced a key concept in the book: that of a man desiring to "go to **court**" with God. He wanted to defend himself and be vindicated, and he also wanted **answers**. But who, he pondered in despair, can defend themselves against God (Job 9:2-3)?
- 9) [January 6] Job longed for someone who would go **between** him and God (Job 9:33), and that person is **Jesus**. He is the one and only **mediator** between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). How wonderful to know that Jesus came to earth and fully experienced the human condition. He **sympathizes** with our weaknesses, and he **encourages** us to run our race with endurance (Heb 4:15; 12:1).
- 10) [January 7] Job's third friend, Zophar, agreed with Bildad and Eliphaz (not a single friend believed in Job's innocence!). To Zophar, the fact that Job claimed to be innocent only showed how **godless** Job was. Zophar lectured Job sternly and warned him that God had not punished him as much as he really **deserved** (Job 11:6). Job sarcastically dismissed the "wisdom" of his friends (Job 12:2) and pointed out that God does not always act in **predictable** ways (Job 12:13-25). Job then continued to speak to God and plead for a chance to **defend** himself in **court** (Job 13:20-22). He concluded with a somber reflection on death and what might come after. He tried to picture life after death (Job 14:13-15), but his hope quickly faded and despair returned (Job 14:18-22).
- 11) [January 8] In his first speech, Eliphaz had been cautious and courteous in his rebuke (Job 4:2). This time he attacked Job sharply and accused him of **foolishness** and **iniquity**. What Job needed, Eliphaz thought, was a fresh reminder of the sinfulness of man and the terrible fate that awaits the wicked. Job responded by telling him that if the situation was reversed, Job would have **comforted** Eliphaz instead of berating him (Job 16:5). Job continued by pointing out that his reaction to the calamity God had brought upon him was **humility** (Job 16:15-17). This is a response we would do well to imitate. Job again longed for an **intercessor** between him and God (Job 16:18-21). Then his thoughts

returned to death. Job’s emotional ups and downs mirror our own in times of suffering—despair one moment and hope the next. However, Job consistently tried to put what he knew to be true about God **above** the emotional torment that he was experiencing. What an inspiring example for us to follow!

- 12) [January 9] In Bildad’s second speech, he criticized Job harshly and painted a cruel picture of the life of the wicked (he used Job’s **words** and **suffering** against him: Job 18:5, 11, 13, 19). His speech served only to torment Job, for Job had already pointed out the **flaw** in Bildad’s thinking: if God does bring this kind of calamity **only** on the wicked, then God had indeed **perverted** justice in Job’s case. Job went on to say that he cried out for help but no one answered. His own family and servants held him in **contempt**. But no sooner had Job voiced his feelings of isolation and disgrace, when suddenly his **faith** in God burst forth: “I know that my [kinsman]-**Redeemer** lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see **God**” (Job 19:25–26). Job was convinced that not even death could separate him from God’s love and final vindication. Bildad is a sobering example of the unjust **persecution** of a godly man by those who profess to be godly themselves (i.e., the church). We need to be very careful what we **say** to those who are suffering. Otherwise, we could be guilty of not speaking of God what is right (cf. Job 42:8).
- 13) [January 10] Zophar was **insulted** and upset by Job’s words, and he expanded on his previous comments by claiming that the wicked may prosper for a **short** time, but God **quickly** destroys them (Job 20:5–7). Job sighed in frustration. His friends couldn’t see the **fallacy** of thinking that because sin can cause suffering, suffering therefore **proves** sin. Job asked, ‘If the triumph of the wicked is short, then why do the wicked live on, growing **old** and increasing in **power**?’ He then gave example after example of how the wicked are rich, powerful and long-lived. Job’s observations come close to being a preface for **Ecclesiastes**: the prosperous and the poor both suffer the same fate (cf. Ecc 2:14–17).
- 14) [January 11] In his third and last speech to Job, Eliphaz claimed that God didn’t **care** about Job’s righteous life (Job 22:3), and he **accused** Job of specific sins: “You have withheld **bread** from the hungry” (Job 22:7; cf. Rev 12:10). Eliphaz warned Job that he couldn’t escape punishment and urged him to turn to God in repentance. Job **ignored** Eliphaz’s accusations, but responded to his urging with, “Oh, that I knew where I might find him!” (Job 23:3). Job was convinced that even though he didn’t know where God was, God **knew** the righteous path he had taken (God knows I’m innocent!). Job **vented** his frustration at how often the wicked go unpunished and concluded with a curse against them (Job 24:1–25).
- 15) [January 12] In his third and last speech to Job, Bildad, frustrated that Job would not admit that his suffering proved his sin, lashed out: ‘How can a **man** like you—a mere maggot, a worm—claim to be **righteous** before the exalted, transcendent God?’ But Job held fast to his **integrity**: “I will never admit you are in the right!” (Job 27:5 NIV). He also affirmed his belief in God’s justice, in spite of not understanding **how** it was being worked out in his own life (Job 27:7–23). The reading concluded with a beautiful and inspiring poem about **wisdom**. Job declared that true wisdom is more precious than **gold**, for it is found only in a loving **relationship** with God (Job 28:12–28).
- 16) [January 13] Job’s final words: Job began by fondly remembering the happiness and glory of his **past** life (Job 29). Then he gave a vivid description of the misery and disgrace of his **present** calamity (Job 30). Job concluded with a detailed, formal oath of **innocence** (Job 31). In these chapters we get a behind-the-scenes view of what God meant when He said that Job was a “blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil” (Job 1:8). Job’s oath of innocence is a personal challenge to us. Can we look in the mirror of Job’s words and measure up to his integrity? Have we

made a “**covenant** with our eyes” (Job 31:1) to avoid looking on others with **lust**? Have we “rejoiced at the ruin of him who **hated** us, or exulted when evil overtook him”? (Job 31:29). Can we say that we have kept ourselves from falsehood and **deceit**?

- 17) [January 14] Elihu’s first two speeches to Job. Elihu remained **silent** while Bildad, Eliphaz and Zophar all tried to refute Job. When they failed, Elihu could restrain himself no longer. In Elihu’s mind Job’s guilt was **certain** (Job 34:36–37). If Job’s assertions of innocence were left unanswered, it would mean that God had not acted **righteously** and justly—and that was impossible. Previously, Job had longed for an **arbiter**, someone who would go between him and God (Job 9:33). Elihu volunteered himself. He would act as **mediator** and adjudicate Job’s case against God (Job 32:12; 33:12). However, Elihu’s message, while partially accurate (God does use suffering to **discipline** us, and God does **forgive** those who repent; cf. Job 33:19, 26), was based on the same faulty premise as Job’s friends. Further, Elihu **twisted** many of Job’s words (Job 34:5–9), and he cast Job’s cries of frustration and confusion in the **worst** possible light.
- 18) [January 15] Elihu’s last two speeches to Job. Elihu repeated his earlier claim: God uses **suffering** to turn people from their sin (Job 36:5–15). This is true, but Elihu misapplied this truth to Job. He believed that Job’s suffering **proved** he had sinned (Job 36:16–21). Contrary to Elihu’s claims, God is not **distant** and removed from our trials and concerns, God is not **silent** and withdrawn when we cry out to Him, and God is not so **high** and lofty that we cannot turn to Him (Ps 138:6; Matt 11:28). Elihu then gave eloquent descriptions of God’s power as seen in the **thunderstorm** and the icy blasts of **winter** (Job 36:22–37:13). Elihu’s point was: *God is so far above you, Job. It’s ridiculous to want to plead your case to God* (Job 37:19–20). This shows us how bad **theology** misrepresents who God is and drives people away from God, rather than drawing them closer and building them up in the faith (cf. Job 35:1–8). When God emphasizes His power and greatness, He does so in order to show the world that He is the one **true** God (cf. Isa 45:5–8). God wants everyone to turn to Him and be **saved** (Isa 45:21–22).
- 19) [January 16] God began by asking Job about the creation of the **earth** and the **weather**. God concluded by asking him about the **animals**, with special attention given to the **Behemoth**, the fiercest land animal, and the **Leviathan**, the most terrifying sea creature. God’s questions were not meant to belittle or demean Job. Rather, they were designed to help him **focus** on several key truths: 1) God is the **Creator**; we are the created, 2) God was there in the **beginning**; we were not, 3) God is all-**knowing** and all-**powerful**; we are powerless and ignorant before Him. The proper response to these truths is humility, reverence and awe, and that’s exactly how Job reacted (Job 42:1–6). God gave Job a precious **gift**: a personal, intimate **experience** of His majestic presence. Being in God’s presence was more than enough for Job: “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye **sees** you” (Job 42:5). After God questioned Job, He restored his fortune, and his end was more **blessed** than his beginning. “And Job died, an old man, and full of days” (Job 42:17).
- 20) [January 17] Abram, a descendant of **Shem**, was an ordinary man living a **pagan** life in Ur. God sovereignly **chose** him to be the father of **Israel** and the ancestor of **Jesus**, the Messiah. God preached the **gospel** to him when He said, “And **in you** all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12:3; Gal 3:8). Abram responded to God’s call in **faith** (Heb 11:8), and by faith he lived in his own land as a **sojourner**, patiently waiting on God’s time-table (Heb 11:9). The story of Abraham deceiving Pharaoh is convicting. How many times have we tried to solve our problems on our **own**, or taken matters into our hands out of **fear**? When **Lot** was captured by Chedorlaomer’s coalition of kings, Abram pursued them with his servants and attacked them near Damascus. With God’s help, he defeated them and recovered Lot, his family and their possessions. Afterward, he was privileged

to meet the high priest **Melchizedek**, who was a **type** of God's Son, Jesus Christ (Ps 110:4).

- 21) [January 18] Abram was justified by **faith**. God took him outside his tent one night and told him that his descendants would be as numerous as the **stars** of heaven. Abram believed God, and God "counted it to him as **righteousness**" (Gen 15:6). Abraham is **the example** of how we are saved by grace through faith (Rom 4:1–3; John 8:38–40). Paul later told the Galatians that God's primary purpose in setting apart the Jews was to create a **spiritual** lineage, not a physical one. Being a "child of Abraham" means responding to God in **faith** and **obedience** like Abraham (cf. Gal 3:6–9). Years went by and Abram still had no child. Eventually, he listened to the advice of his wife Sarai and had a child through her Egyptian slave **Hagar**. Yet Ishmael was not the child of the **promise**, and Paul later used this story to demonstrate that not every descendant of Abraham is a true "child of Abraham." Only those who **believe** like Abraham can claim such a privilege (cf. Rom 9:6–9). Paul also pointed out that Abraham was justified **before** he received the sign of circumcision (Rom 4:10). God did this deliberately in order to make him the father of **all** who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well (Rom 4:11–12).
- 22) [January 19] God described the sin of Sodom this way: "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had **pride**, excess of **food**, and prosperous **ease**, but did not **aid** the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an **abomination** before me. So I removed them, when I saw it" (Ezek 16:49–50). Knowing that Abraham's nephew Lot was living in Sodom, God revealed to Abraham what He was about to do (Gen 18:17–19). God allowed Abraham to **intercede** for Sodom because God loved him and cared about his feelings. God wanted Abraham to understand that His justice and mercy are perfectly **balanced**. God does not take pleasure in destroying the wicked, but He must punish sin. God sent angels into Sodom to rescue Lot, who was greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of wicked. Peter later said that this shows that God knows "how to **rescue** the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment" (2 Pet 2:7–9). Lot and his wife and two daughters made it out of the city before God's judgment came, but Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Jesus later used her as an **example** of how we can become so attached to this world that we end up being caught up in the destruction that falls on the ungodly (cf. Luke 17:32–33).
- 23) [January 20] Abraham was **100** years old when Isaac was born. The author of Hebrews said that "by **faith**" both Abraham and Sarah received power to conceive (Heb 11:11–12). They believed God could accomplish what was physically **impossible**, and their belief was grounded in the fact that they "considered him **faithful** who had promised." The years passed and Isaac grew into a young teenager. At that time, God decided to **test** Abraham's faith by asking him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. If God tested Abraham, He will also test us. God tests our faith to refine our **character** and build in us the spiritual muscle of **endurance** (cf. Deut 8:2–3; James 1:2–4). His goal is not to harm us, but to make us more like His Son, Jesus Christ. Abraham obeyed without **delay**. He was so convinced that God would keep His promise, that he believed God would raise Isaac from the **dead!** (cf. Heb 11:19). What a wonderful example of what to do when life's circumstances seem to **contradict** God's promise! James said that Abraham demonstrated the kind of faith that **justifies** us before God—it is a faith that **obeys!** (cf. James 2:21–24). After Abraham finished offering the ram, God swore by Himself that He would keep His promise to bless Abraham. Hebrews says that God did this not only for Abraham, but also for us, "so that by two **unchangeable** things, in which it is impossible for God to **lie**, we who have fled for refuge might have strong **encouragement** to hold fast to the hope set before us" (Heb 6:18).

- 24) [January 21] After Sarah died, Abraham **bought** a burial place for her from the Hittites. Even though God had promised the land to Abraham, he did not demand it of Ephron or take it by force. Instead, he paid for it with a large quantity of silver. This showed his willingness to **wait** on God's timing. When it was time for Isaac to marry, Abraham sent his servant to find a wife from his relatives. His insistence that Isaac should remain in the promised land and not marry one of the locals reveals his **faith** in God's word. He believed that God would one day **destroy** the Canaanites, and he did not want his son to become entangled with them. God showed Himself faithful to Abraham's servant and helped him find Rebekah, a wife that comforted Isaac after his mother's death. Isaac and Rebekah struggled with **infertility**, just like Abraham and Sarah. But rather than **taking** matters into their own hands, Isaac prayed to God, and God enabled Rebekah to conceive twins. God told her that two **nations** were in her womb, and that the older would serve the younger. Paul later cited this as evidence of the fact that God's promise was to the Israel of **faith**, not **ethnic** Israel (cf. Rom 9:6–13). Abraham died at the ripe old age of 175! He is an inspiring example of a man who lived **by** faith and died **in** faith (Heb 11:13–16).
- 25) [January 22] Esau and Jacob grew into manhood. Sadly, Esau became a **godless**, profane man, who "sold his own birthright for a **single** meal" (Heb 12:16). His wives made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 26:34–35). Isaac continued to serve God faithfully, but like his father, he allowed **fear** to overcome his faith, and he deceived King Abimelech. Nevertheless, God blessed him, and he became so rich and powerful that he had to leave the Philistines. When the time came for Isaac to bless his sons, Rebekah **conspired** with Jacob to steal Esau's blessing. Their scheme succeeded, and Jacob received the prophetic blessing of supremacy: "May peoples **serve** you...And may your mother's sons bow down to you" (Gen 27:29). When Isaac realized he had been tricked, he did not **curse** Jacob; instead he acknowledged that although Jacob received the blessing through deception, it was his by divine purpose: "Yes, and he **shall** be blessed" (Gen 27:33). Esau pled with Isaac to **change** his mind, but Isaac refused (cf. Heb 12:17 NIV84). Esau was furious and plotted to kill Jacob as soon as Isaac died. Rebekah learned of Esau's plan, and urged Jacob to flee to her brother **Laban** in Haran. Isaac blessed Jacob **again** before he left, and by **faith** he passed on the blessing which God had given to Abraham (Gen 28:4–5; Heb 11:20).
- 26) [January 23] Jacob, who deceived his father, was himself deceived by his uncle Laban. How true it is that we **reap** what we sow (Gal 6:7–8)! Laban's deception set the stage for a bitter **war** between his daughters, Leah and Rachel. Jacob loved Rachel, and when God saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb while Rachel remained barren. Truly, we serve a **compassionate** God! Not only did Leah have the honor of mothering the priestly (**Levi**) and royal (**Judah**) tribes of Israel, she was ultimately the mother of **Jesus**, who Himself embodies both roles (Heb 7:11–22). Rather than seeking God as her aunt Rebekah had done (Gen 25:21), Rachel took matters into her own hands and urged Jacob to father children through her maid **Bilhah** (cf. Gen 16:1–2). Leah soon returned the favor, and Jacob's children grew up caught in the middle of a resentful **struggle** between his wives. In the meantime, Laban realized that he was being **blessed** because of Jacob. He convinced Jacob to stay, and then tried to cheat him. Yet God prospered Jacob, and he became very rich (Gen 30:43). Jacob's life with Laban is a fascinating example of how God used one deceiver to **discipline** and **train** another. Do we recognize and appreciate that God brings **irritations** into our lives in order to **refine** our character?
- 27) [January 24] The "few days" that Rebekah advised Jacob to wait while Esau cooled down turned into **20** years! Those years **humbled** Jacob, and he proved himself to be **honest** and **hard-working** (Gen 31:6). Laban tried to **cheat** Jacob every chance he got, but Jacob did not respond in kind (Gen 31:39). Instead, he **submitted** to Laban and **waited** on God to settle the score (Gen 31:41–42). He didn't even **leave** on his own accord. He stayed until God told him to leave (Gen 31:3). However, he

'neglected' to tell Laban that he was leaving (another decision based on **fear**), and Rachel, perhaps in payback for her wedding disaster, stole her father's household idols. Laban pursued Jacob, but God protected Jacob from his wrath. They ended up making a covenant and parted ways in **peace** (Prov 16:7). Jacob's thoughts then turned to Esau. Did he still bear a grudge? News of Esau's approach "with **400** men" seemed to be answer enough. Jacob did not try to deal with Esau on his own. He took **prudent** action (Gen 32:7–8, 13–20), and he **cried** out to God for help (Gen 32:9–12). But instead of appearing to Esau as He had to Laban, God came and **wrestled** with Jacob! Jacob walked away with a limp, a new name, a blessing and a reconciled brother.

- 28) [January 25] The rape of Dinah has great significance in the story of Jacob: (1) it explains why Jacob later **curse**d Simeon and Levi's anger and prophesied that they would be **scattered** in Israel (Gen 49:7), (2) it sets the stage for further **problems** within Jacob's family (**Reuben** and Bilhah), (3) it was used by God to call Jacob to renewed **loyalty** (all **idols** were removed), (4) it illustrates the **danger** of settling near a wicked city (Lot in Sodom), and (5) it highlights God's supernatural **protection** of Jacob and His faithfulness in spite of Jacob's tendency to get himself into trouble. Jacob worshipped God at Bethel, and God blessed him. He continued his journey south and finally returned home to his father Isaac.
- 29) [January 26] Jacob's **favoritism** toward Joseph, the firstborn son of his beloved Rachel, caused his other sons to become jealous and resentful. This teaches us how important it is to avoid giving **preferential** treatment to one child over another. It also shows how people tend to **imitate** their own experiences (Jacob's father Isaac had a favorite: **Esau**). Joseph's dreams aggravated the situation, and one day, when they had Joseph alone and far from home, his brothers decided to kill him. This illustrates what John said, "Everyone who hates his brother is a **murderer**" (1 John 3:15). **Reuben**, worried that he would be blamed for what happened, convinced his brothers to put Joseph into a cistern instead of killing him outright. His plan to rescue Joseph was frustrated, however, when **Judah** sold Joseph into slavery. Joseph ended up in Egypt, serving as a slave in Potiphar's house. God was with him, however, and **prospered** the work of his hand. Potiphar **noticed** this, and eventually Joseph was **master** of his entire house. This teaches us that God doesn't always **save** us from hard situations, but He is always there to **help** and prosper us. Potiphar's wife also noticed Joseph, and although she tried to seduce him, Joseph resisted her advances by saying it would be a **betrayal** of Potiphar and a sin against **God**. What a remarkable example of true character!
- 30) [January 27] After almost a **decade** of hard work and loyal service to Potiphar, Joseph was falsely accused and thrown into prison. This means that we can be in the **center** of God's will, doing God's **work**, and still be treated unjustly and unfairly by the people we're serving. To add insult to injury, when Joseph showed kindness to the baker and cupbearer, the cupbearer "did not remember Joseph, but **forgot** him." (Gen 40:23). Yet Joseph maintained a good **attitude** and a submissive spirit, and because of that God blessed him and made him prosper. After **two** years in prison, with no end in sight, God sovereignly acted to elevate Joseph to second in power under Pharaoh (from slave to vizier in **13** years). God truly is with those who **wait** patiently on Him! During the seven years of plenty, Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim: 'God has made me **forget**' and 'God has made me **fruitful**.' What a beautiful testament to God's power to restore and refresh!
- 31) [January 28] Judah had sold Joseph into slavery, believing that Joseph would not **survive** (see Gen 42:13). His "murder" of Jacob's son was brought back on his own head when God killed his sons, **Er** and **Onan**. Judah also found out what it felt like to be **deceived**. His daughter-in-law, Tamar, tricked him into fathering her children. This teaches us that we will **reap** what we **sow**. Judah sowed murder and deception, and he reaped death and humiliation. The seven years of plenty came to an end, just as God said, and Jacob sent his sons (without **Benjamin**) down to Egypt to buy grain. Although they

didn't know Joseph, he recognized them, and he was consumed by a desire to **know** if they were still the lying, scheming, murderous men that had callously sold him into slavery. He threw them into prison (only three **days** compared to his three years) and then released them on the condition that **Simeon** stayed behind as a pledge that they would return with Benjamin. Would they care enough about Simeon to come back and rescue him? Were they telling the truth about Benjamin or had they killed him too? Would they keep silent about the money Joseph put back in their sacks? Joseph had set the perfect **test** to see if his brothers had changed after more than **twenty** years. This teaches us that **adversity** is the true test of **character**, for it always reveals the truth of what lies in our hearts.

- 32) [January 29] The famine continued, but Jacob still refused to let them take Benjamin down to Egypt. **Judah** finally offered himself as surety: "Let me bear the blame before you forever" (Gen 43:9). Jacob relented, and they set out for Egypt with Benjamin and the **money** Joseph had slipped back into their sacks. Joseph welcomed them with a feast, but he had one final test for his brothers. They had shown themselves **honest** with the money and **faithful** to their word to bring Benjamin and ransom Simeon. But Simeon was one of their own. What would they do if Benjamin's life was at stake? Would they risk their necks to save Rachel's **last** son, the son to whom Jacob had no doubt shown even more **favoritism** than he had toward Joseph? Joseph watched in wonder as they did. They tore their clothes and fell down before him. **Judah** begged for Benjamin's release and offered himself as Joseph's slave. The man who had wanted to make some **money** off Joseph's life now willingly gave up everything to save his brother. The man who had watched in silence as **Jacob** wept over Joseph's death, now pleaded to spare his father this further grief. Here was true repentance indeed! Joseph could stand it no longer, and he revealed himself to them with tears. He forgave them with all his heart and honored them with the best of Egypt. Joseph told his brothers, "It was not you who sent me here, but **God**" (Gen 45:8). What **wisdom** and **humility**—the humility to submit to God's will and the wisdom to see God's hand in all things.
- 33) [January 30] God arranged Jacob's relocation to Egypt so Israel wouldn't be **absorbed** into the wicked culture of the Canaanites (some of Jacob's sons had already married Canaanites). The Egyptians loathed (lit. 'abominated') **shepherds**, and thus Jacob's family could live in Egypt without danger of being assimilated by the Egyptians. This teaches us that God **orchestrates** events far in advance so His purposes and plans will be accomplished. It also shows us how important it is to keep ourselves **separate** and distinct from the world. Jacob was reunited with his son, and Joseph held his father close as they washed away the years of pain and sorrow with their tears. This reminds us that it will be worth it all to see **Jesus** in heaven! Israel lived in Egypt for the next 17 years, and when the time came for him to die, he was **147** years old. He **adopted** Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as his own, and blessed them. His blessing put Ephraim, the **younger**, before Manasseh, the **firstborn**. Hebrews tells us that Jacob did this by **faith**—he flouted custom and acted in obedience to what God had revealed to him (Heb 11:21). Before he died, Jacob said that God had been his **shepherd** all his life. In his old age, he could clearly see his **dependence** on God. What a change from his scheming and deceitful youth!
- 34) [January 31] Before Jacob died, he **blessed** his sons and made a **prediction** about each one's future. Reuben, Simeon and Levi were all disqualified from **leadership**, and that privilege was given to **Judah**, the son who had responded with humility to God's discipline. From his descendants would come a **king** who would rule the nations (Gen 49:10; first **David** and ultimately **Jesus**). Jacob also granted a double portion to **Joseph**, the son who had remained faithful and true his entire life. Jacob's blessing reveals how much our **character** determines our choices, and how much our choices determine our **future**. Jacob died, and his sons kept their word by burying him in the cave of Machpelah (with Leah). Joseph died 54 years later, having lived to see his children's children. He

died “in **faith**,” for he was so sure that God would keep His promise that he made his brothers swear to carry his **bones** with them when they left Egypt. The years passed and that entire generation died. Around 236 years after Joseph’s death, a king arose over Egypt who did not respect or honor Joseph’s memory. He saw the thriving Israelite population as a **threat**, and he began killing all the baby **boys**. Moses was born during this time of terror, but his life was saved because his parents feared God more than they feared Pharaoh. They hid him as long as they could, and then God rescued him by using the king’s own **daughter**! We show who we fear most by whom we choose to **obey** (Matt 10:28). Moses’ parents are excellent examples of what it means to live “by faith” (Heb 11:23).