



**LIBERATING**  
**FAITH STUDIES**

**GOD'S**  
***EXCEPTIONAL CHOICE***

# **LIBERATING FAITH STUDIES SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY OF THE AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

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**Ages 18-Up**

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# The Order of Service

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary  
as a signal for silence
  - II. Singing
  - III. The Apostles' Creed
  - IV. Prayer, closing with the  
Lord's Prayer in concert
  - V. Singing
  - VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
  - VII. Responsive reading  
of the lesson text by school
  - VIII. The Decalogue
- 

## The Lesson

- I. Organ interlude while  
the classes are being arranged
  - II. Class study of the lesson
  - III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
  - IV. Closing bell — silence
- 

## The Closing

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application  
of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

### Editorial Staff

Publisher • Rev. Dr. Roderick D. Belin

Editor • Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce

— Lessons —

Dr. Catherine S. Powell

### The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

### The Church School Creed

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

A.M.E. Discipline

Hello, AME Church School Member!

**T**he Home Daily Bible Readings will continue to appear at the end of each Sunday's lesson but they will be the readings for the following week. We made this change in response to your requests. The readings for the first week are on the following page.

This Sunday will highlight the vital work of the Church School and recognize the excellent work of Church School students and leaders. Please visit our website- [www.iamame.org](http://www.iamame.org)- for ideas to observe AME Church School Sunday and to find other worship and study resources to empower you and enhance the life of the church.

For over a year we have used Zoom and Facebook to facilitate our weekly Connectional Church School with teachers (lay and clergy) from around the AME Connection. They generously share their knowledge, talents, and expertise with a weekly average of 500 participants viewing via Zoom and 1500 on Facebook.

This virtual AME Connectional Church School was birthed due to the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The blessings from the teachings have been immeasurable. We will continue this Connectional Church School on Sundays at 9:00 a.m. EST. Join us! Zoom Meeting ID: 829 9325 1894.

Visit our website- [www.iamame.org](http://www.iamame.org)- to find worship and study resources to empower you and enhance the life of the church.

Like our Facebook page so you will be informed about programming and important announcements from the Publishing House and *The Christian Recorder*. [www.facebook.com/amecpublishing](https://www.facebook.com/amecpublishing).

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Thank you for purchasing *Liberating Faith Studies*. We are working every day to fulfill our mission to provide high quality resources to empower us to spread Jesus Christ's liberating gospel, pursue justice, and enhance the social development of all people.

And, always remember, I am praying for you.

Roderick D. Belin  
President/Publisher

**HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

**August 29-September 4**

<b>Monday</b>	Hebrews 11:8-19 (The Faith of Abraham)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Psalms 84 (How Lovely Is Your Dwelling Place!)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Romans 4:1-12 (God Reckons Righteousness Apart from Works)
<b>Thursday</b>	Romans 4:13-25 (A Promised Inheritance)
<b>Friday</b>	John 8:51-59 (Abraham Rejoices in Christ)
<b>Saturday</b>	Genesis 11:27-32 (First Steps of Faith)
<b>Sunday</b>	Genesis 12:1-7; 15:1-7 (Called to Be a Blessing)

## The Call of Abram

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 12:1-7; 15:1-7

Focus Scripture: Genesis 12:1-5; 7; 15:1-7

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*Key Verse: Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.*

*Genesis 12:7 (NRSV)*

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### GENESIS 12:1-5, 7; 15:1-7(NRSV)

#### Genesis 12:1-5

1 Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

4 So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

5 Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan,...

#### 7

7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.

#### 15:1-7

1 After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great."

2 But Abram said, "O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

3 And Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir."

4 But the word of the Lord came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very

### GENESIS 12:1-5, 7; 15:1-7(KJV)

#### Genesis 12:1-5

1 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

4 So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

#### 7

7 And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.

#### 15:1-7

1 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

2 And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?

3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

4 And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but

own issue shall be your heir.”

5 He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

6 And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.

7 Then he said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.”

he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

6 And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

7 And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

## KEY TERMS

- **Canaan** – A country located more than 7000 miles from Haran; the place where Abram’s father died. Canaan is commonly referred to as the “Promised Land;” As reflected in our **Key Verse**, this is the land God promised to Abram and his descendants.
- **Haran** – A city located in Northern Turkey, about ten miles from the Syrian-Turkish border; the city in which Abram lived when God instructed him to “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” (Genesis 12:1)
- **Ur** – Abram’s birthplace.

## INTRODUCTION

The title of this quarter’s lessons is “God’s Exceptional Choice.” It traces the history of salvation from God’s choosing or selecting “Abram,” whom he renamed “Abraham,” to his sending Jesus Christ

to die for our sins and concludes with the establishment of the early church. This first lesson, like a closely focused lens, allows us to concentrate on Abram, whom God selected and called to become the father of a new nation to be blessed and used by God to bless the whole world.

## TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

### God’s Call and Abram’s Response, Genesis 12:1-5, 7

Romans 11:34 (NRSV) asks two rhetorical questions: (1) “For who has known the mind of the Lord? (2) Or who has been his counselor?” Of course, no one can answer these questions. When we look at Abram and his status in Haran, we can see that God’s selection of him for this quintessential role is consistent with 1 Samuel 16:7(b), wherein he declared to the prophet, Samuel, that ... “the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

God calls Abram with conditional promises




that will also involve his family. God promises Abram and his descendants a superior life and lifestyle, filled with continuous blessings for themselves and curses for their enemies. This family would also bless the whole world! However, Abram would have to forfeit the identity and security resources to which humankind commonly clings. “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land I will show you” was what God required of Abram (Genesis 12:1). The blessings were contingent upon implicit trust and obedience from Abram. The scriptures indicate Abram responded immediately, with absolute obedience.

### **God’s Covenant with Abram, Genesis 15:1-7**

Although his faith is still strong, human curiosity is evident in Abram’s communications about the legacy and descendants God promised him. So, Abram raises a pivotal question essential to nation-building plans, “How can God guarantee his promises to Abram and his descendants

when he has not blessed Abram with descendants?” Undoubtedly, Abram was also keenly aware of his age and wondered whether his “biological clock” might prohibit his ability to father a child. Abram was seventy-five years old when God called him in Haran.

Abram’s questioning also implies an underlying concern about the fairness of his plight. Does God expect him



**As a result  
of Abram’s  
faithfulness,  
God used the  
conditional  
promises in  
Genesis 12:2 to  
form a covenant  
(the Abrahamic**

to be satisfied with Eliezer, his servant, being his heir? God’s mercifulness is vividly displayed during a visit with Abram in a vision. He shows an empathic understanding of Abram’s need for more information and clarity. So, God takes Abram outside and gives him a visible example, using the incalculable number of stars to represent the infinite numbers

of descendants he planned for Abram. As a result of Abram’s faithfulness, God used the conditional promises in Genesis 12:2 to form a covenant (the Abrahamic Covenant). More details of the covenant and new names for Abram and his wife,



Sarai, are covered in Genesis 15:8-17. Abram was renamed Abraham, and Sarai became Sarah. Praise God; the Abrahamic covenant paved the way for the coming of Jesus Christ and the availability of salvation to the whole world!

### SANKOFA

Because of tendencies to ignore or forget history, we can easily overlook that Abram and his family were immigrants. They migrated from Ur, Abram's birthplace, to Haran on a journey to Canaan with Terah, Abram's father, leading the way. Both Ur and Haran were cities wherein idol worshippers proliferated. The family stopped in Haran for some reason, and Terah died there at the age of 205 (Genesis 11:31). With God's call, Abram and his family were required to migrate further, later becoming immigrants in Canaan. From their history, we can see that territorialism and the rejection of "others" are not new phenomena. Biblical accountings of "clashes" between Abram's family

and leaders of other nations abound, beginning as early as Genesis 14 when Lot was captured and had to be rescued by Abram.

Isn't it interesting that as God calls and uses people from every nation today, some immigrants are more often rejected and denied the rights and privileges of citizenship than others? An *immigrant* is a label or status applicable to anyone who

From their history, we can see that territorialism and the rejection of "others" are not new phenomena.

enters a country other than their homeland to settle there. As we all know, immigration is a "hot button" issue in America today! There is a deep divide in this country regarding who should be allowed to immigrate to the United States and what measurements or human attributes should be considered

to determine eligibility for living in this country. Similar resistance to immigration exists in other countries as well.

Professor Henry Louis Gates unambiguously reveals the paradoxical nature of the United States' immigration controversies. Professor Gates, in an article entitled, "What Roots Means to

Me” (*Reader’s Digest*, February 2022), states the following, “We are a nation of immigrants. Even Native Americans came here from somewhere else; they walked across the Bering Strait some 15,000 years ago.” He also notes that although Africans’ emigration to the United States was not voluntary, we are also immigrants, as is the case with all inhabitants of this country.

### CASE STUDY

Unfortunately, the advantages of inclusive immigration policies are too often overlooked or downplayed to justify systemic discriminatory practices within our immigration policies. Our beloved United States general and statesman, the Honorable Colin Powell, born on April

5, 1937, and died on October 18, 2021, was an extraordinary example of the advantages of inclusive immigration policies and practices. The son of Jamaican immigrants, General Powell became a four-star general, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1989-93), and secretary of State (2001-2005). He was

also the first African American to hold either position. He held numerous other prestigious posts within the Pentagon and elsewhere during his distinguished career. Although he had the opportunity and chose not to run for president of the United States, General Powell was world-renowned for his statesmanship and consistency in speaking out on justice and equity issues. Worthy of note

is his record of putting his oath of allegiance to the United States Constitution and his love for serving all people above any personal political aspirations he might have otherwise.

### LIFE APPLICATION

For humankind, being chosen equates with “being selected.” Being selected infers

that other, equal or superior, choices are available. From childhood memories, most adults can recall how much they valued being selected to become members of an esteemed peer group or team. As adults, we operate in many different spheres – religious, academic, vocational, social, civic, etc. However, aspirations to be



General Powell  
became a four-star  
general, chairman of  
the Joint Chiefs of Staff

chosen or selected continue – and in many cases, they intensify! However, rejection, marginalization, social, and economic inequities, and so forth are common realities for minorities. Many are perceived as “others” and less worthy or deserving. Nevertheless, we can all rejoice that, like Abram, we have all been chosen by God. Also, just as God called Abram, he is calling us.

Isn't it exciting to know that Abram's selection by God was a precursor to the coming of Jesus Christ? Whereas Israel was the nation God initially called, he later extended through Jesus Christ the invitation to others. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). He also showed inclusivity when he said “whosoever will, let him come.”

### QUESTIONS:

1. What assignment has God given you? When and what will you do to find the answer if you are uncertain?
2. What gifts or special attributes do

you possess to wholeheartedly serve God?

3. What inspirations can you draw from Abram's faith and obedience?
4. As much as this lesson is about calling, it is also about patience and trust. What can we do to increase both our patience and trust in God's choice and timing?

### CLOSING DEVOTIONS



...we can all rejoice that, like Abram, we have all been chosen by God. Also, just as God called Abram, he is calling us.

**Closing Song:** “Yes Lord, Yes” (DVD) by Evangelist Shirley Caesar

**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for letting us learn about faith and obedience that please you. We thank you for Abram's example and that you are still calling. Please attune our ears to hear you

speak to us and give us receptive minds and hearts to obey you unequivocally. Please let us be reminded of your inclusiveness so that we do not become discouraged by rejection and other negative identity-based experiences. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

**HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS****September 5-September 11**

<b>Monday</b>	Luke 13:23-30 (The First Will Be Last)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Psalm 147:1-6, 12-20 (God Is Great and Gracious)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Psalm 75 (God Judges Rightly)
<b>Thursday</b>	Romans 9:6-16 (God's Word Does Not Fail)
<b>Friday</b>	Romans 9:17-29 (Who Can Argue with God?)
<b>Saturday</b>	Genesis 28:10-22 (God Blesses Jacob)
<b>Sunday</b>	Genesis 25:19-34 (God Is Free to Choose)



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## GOD CHOOSES THE YOUNGER TWIN

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Lesson Scripture: Genesis 25:19-34

Focus Scripture: Genesis 25:19b-34

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*Key Verse: And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger."*

*Genesis 25:23 (NRSV)*

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### GENESIS 25:19B-34 (NRSV)

19b Abraham was the father of Isaac,

20 and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean.

21 Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived.

22 The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.

23 And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger."

24 When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb.

25 The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau.

26 Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

27 When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents.

28 Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished.

30 Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.)

31 Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright."

32 Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use

### GENESIS 25:19B-34 (KJV)

19b Abraham begat Isaac:

20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

21 And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the Lord.

23 And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

25 And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

27 And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

28 And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:

30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

32 And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

is a birthright to me?”

33 Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

## KEY TERMS

- **Covenant** – An alliance or agreement between two parties with equal or unequal authorities.

God’s covenants with humankind are the latter type, as humankind can never achieve equality with sovereign God.

- **Esau** – The first-born son of Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob’s twin brother and father of the Edomites.

- **Jacob** – Hebrew name: *Deceiver*, Esau’s younger twin brother, who became the father of the Israelites. He fathered twelve sons, who formed twelve tribes; God changed Jacob’s name to Israel (Gen. 32:28).



Humankind  
can never fully  
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his actions!

overarching theme for today’s lesson, and it will continue for the rest of this quarter. Today’s lesson focuses on how God chose to transfer Abraham’s inheritance,

including the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant, to the next generation. His choice of benefactors was limited to Isaac’s twin sons: Esau and Jacob. Jacob, the younger son, was God’s choice. Jewish laws and tradition would require that Esau, the older twin, should be selected.

Despite the family’s dysfunctions and the transgressions of Isaac, Rebecca, and their sons, God did not change his plans. Jacob’s choice before he was born was an irreversible link to God’s covenant with Abraham. Humankind can never fully comprehend either God’s reasonings or his actions!

## INTRODUCTION

*God’s Call to Abram* continues to be the

## TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

### Isaac and Rebecca Are Blessed Parents, Genesis 25:19b-21

Isaac was forty years old when he and Rebecca married. Like his parents, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca struggled with fertility problems. As Abraham appealed to God for help, so did Isaac (v. 21).

The Lord responded affirmatively to Isaac's prayers, and Rebecca conceived. One might surmise that they were "doubly blessed" because twin sons, Esau and Jacob, were conceived. They are the first twins reported in the Bible. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born!

### Differences Instigate Conflict, Genesis 25:22-28

Except for being born as twins and raised by the same parents, Esau and Jacob seem to have had very little in common. The conflict between the two was obvious before birth. In our **Key Verse** (Genesis 25:23), God explains the reason for their

conflict. The two nations to which God referred were Israel and Edom.

Esau, the older twin's name, was based on his appearance. "The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle" (Genesis 26:25a). On the other hand, Jacob's name was based on his eccentric behavior at birth. "Afterwards, his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he

was named Jacob" (v. 26). Prenatal conflicts between the twins were forewarnings of future conflicts.

Unfortunately, as parents, Jacob and Rebekah failed some important "teachable opportunities." They failed in teaching their sons to love each other and value their differences, and trust that God would provide

for both of them. Instead, the parents showed favoritism. "Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob" (v. 28).

### Esau Sells His Birthright, Genesis 25:28-34

Jacob's "grabbing" of his brother's heel at

“They failed in  
teaching their sons to  
love each other and  
value their differences,  
and trust that God  
would provide for both  
of them.”

birth indicated his future behavior. This is reflected in the “cunning manner” in which he “grabbed Esau’s birthright” as if God needed some help. God chose Jacob before birth! But he was also angered by the fact that Esau was so cavalier about his birthright. He sold it to Jacob for a bowl of soup! Jewish culture gave special rights to the first-born son. Upon the father’s death, the first-born son would become the family’s patriarch, and he would be entitled to a “double portion” of whatever was inherited from the father. According to the scriptures, Esau’s actions demonstrated he “despised his birthright” (v. 34). Rebecca even conspired with Jacob to ensure that Isaac, as he was dying, would bless Jacob instead of Esau. The ensuing conflict forced Jacob to leave home for many years.

Although Jacob and Esau reconciled after a long period of estrangement, the dynamics of their family’s dysfunctions led to intergenerational conflicts. Esau’s descendants, the Edomites, fought

bitterly against Jacob’s descendants, the Israelites. This continued until God judged Edom (Obadiah 1:1-21), and Esau was excluded from the Messianic lineage (Malachi 1:2-3; Romans 9:11-14).

## SANKOFA

Sidney Poitier, who died at the age of 94 in January 2022, became an icon whose life and legacy have far exceeded human expectations globally.

Although Jacob and Esau reconciled after a long period of estrangement, the dynamics of their family’s dysfunctions led to intergenerational conflicts.

Many efforts have been made to capture the essence of his life and legacy, but none have been singularly sufficient. Even the circumstances of his birth and childhood belie the impact of Mr. Poitier’s contributions to humankind and the world.

Sidney Poitier’s parents were Bahamian farmers who would travel to Miami, Florida, to sell tomatoes and other produce. Sidney was their seventh child. He became an American citizen at birth because he was born unexpectedly in Miami while his parents were there to conduct business. He was born three months prematurely and not expected



to live. However, his parents remained in Miami for three months until he was healthy enough to go home with them.

He is reported to have moved to Miami when he was fifteen years old. He intended to live with a brother, but he refused to tolerate the racism he found in Florida. So, at age sixteen, he left Florida and moved to New York City. He already aspired to become an actor. This highly acclaimed American Bahamian actor, film director, and diplomat, with innumerable accomplishments, initiated his career path as a dishwasher in New York City.

### CASE STUDY

Audrey Maame Esi Swatson's achievements epitomize the advantages of positive family dynamics

and relationships. At the young age of twenty-one, Ms. Swatson overcame fears of flying, resistance associated with being the youngest female in a male-dominated profession, and many other challenges to become Ghana's youngest female commercial pilot. As an active commercial pilot, Ms. Swatson

has earned the rank of *first officer*. She is also the founder, chief operating officer (CEO), and owner of Excel Aviation.

In reflecting on her success, Ms. Swatson shared: "My nuclear family was very supportive. Growing up, they had seen what I could do and what I was not able to do as well. My extended family is not so close, so hearing that I wanted to fly, they questioned my parents if they

This highly acclaimed American Bahamian actor, film director, and diplomat, with innumerable accomplishments, initiated his career path as a dishwasher in New York City.

would allow me to do what I wanted to do. My dad doesn't listen to negative vibes like that. He'd ask me time and time again if this is what I want to do, and repeatedly, I said yes." She has also credited God and education for being essential to her success in other cases.

### LIFE APPLICATION

As disciples, we have biological and spiritual or church family members. Each member of a church brings different attributes to the family. Personality differences, age, education, previous training (employment and spiritual), political affiliations, and functional and dysfunctional families are just a few. Differences can cause divisiveness!

However, a growing love for God is like a strong magnetic field that attracts inclusiveness as it diminishes allegiances to human standards for determining acceptability. Jesus commanded that his disciples view him as a model for loving others. “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34).

### QUESTIONS:

1. How might this lesson help you counsel others about family dysfunction?
2. How do you feel about parental favoritism? Cliques among congregations?
3. How could this lesson be used to resolve conflicts between biological or

church family members?

### CLOSING DEVOTION

Father God, for all of your blessings, we thank you. This lesson resonates with us! We are reminded that every aspect of our lives matters and that pleasing you should be the prime motivator in all of our endeavors. Please allow manifestations of your love to flow through us to others, beginning with our own homes and families. We ask you to please allow the love of Jesus Christ to be the model for our behavior. Please forgive us and give us teachable spirits so that we can grow to be more and more like Jesus. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

### HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 12-September 18

<b>Monday</b>	Hebrews 12:7-17 (Don't Reject God's Grace)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Genesis 27:18-29 (A Blessing Bestowed)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Genesis 27:30-41 (A Blessing Forsaken)
<b>Thursday</b>	Romans 11:25-32 (God Will Be Merciful to All)
<b>Friday</b>	Psalms 105:1-11 (Praise for God's Wonderful Works)
<b>Saturday</b>	Genesis 32:3-12 (Seeking Favor in God's Sight)
<b>Sunday</b>	Genesis 32:22-32 (Wrestling for a Blessing)

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## JACOB CALLED ISRAEL

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Lesson Scripture: Genesis 32:22-32

Focus Scripture: Genesis 32:22-32

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*Key Verse: Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Genesis 32:28 (NRSV)*

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### GENESIS 32:22-32 (NRSV)

22 The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

23 He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had.

24 Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

25 When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

26 Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me."

27 So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."

28 Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed."

29 Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him.

30 So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."

31 The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip.

32 Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

### GENESIS 32:22-32 (KJV)

22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

24 And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

31 And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

## KEY TERMS

- **Israel** – Jacob’s new name given by God at Peniel; derives from the Hebrew language, meaning “fighter of God.”
- **Peniel** – The location of Jacob’s intense all-night encounter with God as he fearfully anticipated reuniting with his brother, Esau. Jacob named the site *Peniel* to memorialize his experience: “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved” (Gen. 32:30).

## INTRODUCTION

A lot happened between last week’s lesson and this week’s lesson. As you will recall, Jacob was a trickster. Jacob deceptively acquired Esau’s birthright, and with his mother’s help, he also stole their father’s (Isaac) blessings, which were traditionally bequeathed to the oldest son. Esau was so angry with Jacob that he threatened to kill him (Gen. 27:41). Again, with the aid of his mother, Rebekah, Jacob escaped. She sent him to live in Haran with her brother, Laban.

Laban proved to be a master at

deceitfulness. For twenty years, Jacob was the recipient of many unethical, deceitful deeds perpetrated by his uncle, Laban. God intervened after Jacob had spent twenty years living in Haran as a fugitive from his ancestral home and family. God decided to end Laban’s power over Jacob by sending Jacob back to his homeland. As he instructed Jacob to return to his ancestral home and family,

God assured him that he would be with him (Gen. 31:3).

## TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

Today’s lesson focuses on a pivotal turning point in Jacob’s return home and life after that. Jacob is scared! He has many justifiable reasons to be fearful. He had just had a final confrontation with Laban, who

chased after Jacob when he left Haran. The incident with Laban ended with a peaceful resolution that was memorialized in a covenant. However, Jacob has an even greater challenge ahead of him. Returning home means Jacob has to face his brother again. He’s been warned that Esau is coming to meet him, and he is bringing four hundred men with

“As he instructed Jacob to return to his ancestral home and family, God assured him that he would be with him (Gen. 31:3).”



him. In preparing to meet Esau, Jacob demonstrates maturity and growth as he fervently prays to God, reminding him of his promises (Genesis 32:9-12).

### **Jacob Wrestles with God, Genesis**

#### **32:22-26**

Jacob is terrified! He has sent gifts ahead of him, hoping to appease Esau. He has also sent his wives, servants, and children ahead. He sent his wives and

children ahead, raising some interesting questions about Jacob's values and priorities, even at this juncture in his life. It is nighttime when Jacob might have expected to be alone. However, he had a visitor, a man who "wrestled with him till daybreak" (Genesis 32:24).

Jacob was persistent and demonstrated

strong courage. He continued to wrestle all night to receive a blessing. Jacob survived, but the man struck him on his hip socket, "Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him" (Genesis 32:25). Thus, God's sovereignty and Jacob's dependence on him became physical manifestations.

### **Jacob's Blessing, Genesis 32:27-32**

Jacob is blessed with a new name! Jacob, "the grabber," no longer exists. It was his blessing for "having striven with God and with humans" and having prevailed (Gen. 32:28). His twelve sons and their descendants became known as the twelve tribes of Israel. In the later scriptures, Israel later demonstrated bravery and reconciled with Esau.

Interestingly, God had also blessed Esau.

Esau did not need any of the gifts Jacob offered in his attempts to diffuse any lingering anger Esau might have against him. Most importantly, Jacob is a new man, prepared to fulfill God's plans for his life with a new name.

### **SANKOFA**

"For such a time as this" is commonly associated with

communications between Mordecai and Queen Esther, his orphaned niece (Esther 3-8). The phrase was a part of Mordecai's successful appeal to entice the queen, who was also a Jew, to use her influence with King Xerxes to save the Jewish nation from annihilation. Because of Esther's courage and obedience, the lives of Mordecai and all of the Jews were

“Because of Esther’s courage and obedience, the lives of Mordecai and all of the Jews were saved.”

saved.

“For such a time as this” certainly seems applicable to the life and work of Dr. Kizzmekia Corbett. Dr. Corbett, a thirty-five-year-old African American female, was born in rural North Carolina. Before embarking on higher education ventures at more prestigious institutions, she attended local schools. Fortunately, she had teachers who recognized and helped nurture her gifts during her youth.

Like a springboard, her academic achievements, leadership skills, and concerns for the health and wellness of others have elevated Dr. Corbett to life-saving roles that benefit the whole world.

Unfortunately, Dr. Corbett’s name and contributions to the fight against the Covid-19 Pandemic are

rarely mentioned in the media. However, at an event hosted by the National Urban League in December 2020, Dr. Anthony Fauci said, “The first thing you might want to say to the African American brothers and sisters is that an African American woman developed the vaccine you’re

going to be taking.” In addition to many other distinguished roles, Dr. Corbett is currently the lead scientist on the Moderna Covid-19 Vaccine Team. She has also undertaken a critically important role as a Covid-19 educator. She particularly reaches out to communities of color because of the disparate impacts of Covid and other longstanding healthcare disparities. She makes herself available to church and school groups and media

outlets, and videos that are accessible online. Surely, the timeliness and availability of Dr. Corbett’s services are blessings to humankind globally.

### CASE STUDY

As we have seen with Abraham, Israel, and other people chosen by God, his promises and rewards may be delayed, but God delivers faithfully.

For the first time in history, the National Inventors Hall of fame will become more inclusive with two African American women’s induction. One honoree is the late Dr. Patricia Bath, an ophthalmologist and laser scientist who died in 2019. The other is Dr. Marian Croak, a computer

Dr. Corbett is currently the lead scientist on the Moderna Covid-19 Vaccine Team. She has also undertaken a critically important role as a Covid-19 educator.

engineer.

Dr. Bath was a trailblazer in many endeavors. Her achievements included being the first African American ophthalmology resident at New York University in the 1970s. She was also the first woman elected to be an honorary staff member at UCLA Medical Center in the 1990s. Her greatest honor is recognition for having invented a laser cataract tool, which can vaporize cataract clouds with minimal invasiveness in the lens of a patient's eyes.

Dr. Marian Croak, also a trailblazer in many endeavors, has been employed at Google since 2014. Dr. Croak is noted for having said her interests in STEM subjects and careers began during her childhood. Fortunately, role models, including her father and some teachers, encouraged her to pursue her interests. She received an undergraduate degree from Princeton University and her doctorate from the University of Southern California.

Before Google, Dr. Croak was employed with AT&T Bell Labs. At both Google and AT&T Bell Labs, Dr. Croak is

noted for having been an extraordinary leader and inventor with a worldwide impact. Dr. Croak is also noted for having more than 200 patents in voice and data communications. Her most significant achievements have been the development of technology that converts voice or vocal communications to digital signals that enable computer-generated calls or calls from other digital devices. Dr. Croak is currently employed

as vice president of Engineering at Google. From the beginning of her career in 1982 until 2022, when she will be inducted into the Inventor's Hall of Fame, forty years will have passed. However, the recognition which she sorely deserves will come.

### **LIFE APPLICATION**

God has a plan and a purpose for each of our lives. As we look at the lives of Jacob and others in our lesson today, it is obvious that none of us will know either the detailed journey God will take us on or the length of time it will take us to fulfill his purpose. Notably, we can see clearly how, in many cases, God has to



God has a plan and a purpose for each of our lives.

prepare us before we are ready to start the journey. As a fugitive from home, it took Jacob fourteen years to become Israel. Like Israel, he was prepared to serve God's role for him with the new nation.

Likewise, Joseph needed his experiences in Egypt, and Moses needed his time as a shepherd to prepare for God's purposes. But, what about us? Names had meaning in biblical days. While the legal names on our birth certificates or other official records are not likely to change, it matters how we see ourselves with our names. This is called self-identity, and it impacts how we live our priorities and goals in life.

### QUESTIONS:

1. Are you ready to let God define who

you are and how you live?

2. What personal changes do you associate with having surrendered your life to God?
3. How would you compare Jacob's behavior when he ran away to Haran with his behavior upon his reunion with Esau?

### CLOSING DEVOTION

Lord, thank you for forgiving our sins and teaching us how to live. Sometimes, learning is painful, but we know that you sometimes allow us to suffer because you love us. We know that you will be with us as you were with Jacob. In the name of Jesus, we thank you for being our Father and for loving us despite our human frailties. Amen.

### HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

September 19-September 25

<b>Monday</b>	Genesis 38:12-19, 24-26 (Tamar Asserts Her Rights)
<b>Tuesday</b>	Ruth 4:9-17 (Ruth Gives Birth to Obed)
<b>Wednesday</b>	Numbers 23:18-26 (God's Blessings for Israel)
<b>Thursday</b>	Numbers 24:2-9, 15-17 (A Scepter Shall Rise from Israel)
<b>Friday</b>	Revelation 4 (The Heavenly Throne)
<b>Saturday</b>	Revelation 5 (The Conquering Lion of Judah)
<b>Sunday</b>	Genesis 49:8-12 (Judah Destined to Reign)