God’s New Name for Jacob

Summary and Goal
In the past few sessions, we have followed Jacob as he tricked his father and brother, fled from his home, and traveled to Paddan-aram to find a wife. Even amidst more deception by Jacob and others, God was faithful to His promise to be with Jacob and bless him. In this session, we will see that God did more than just provide Jacob with a family and possessions; He was also faithful to be at work in Jacob. God was changing the patriarch—slowly but surely—as He positioned him for the task He had been given. We will see that in the same way, God is faithful to keep His promises to us and that we too are to respond to His gracious provision of salvation through demonstrating new life in Christ.

Session Outline
1. Jacob’s old name reflects his flawed character (Gen. 32:24-27).
2. Jacob’s new name reflects the grace God has shown him (Gen. 32:28-32).
3. Jacob’s new name reflects the task God has given him (Gen. 35:9-15).

Session in a Sentence
God is at work changing His people so that we may fulfill what He has called us to do.

Christ Connection
God’s renaming of individuals in the Old Testament reflects both privilege and responsibility. As Christians, we bear the name of Christ. We receive both the privilege of salvation and the responsibility of mission.

Missional Application
Because we have been given the new name of Christians, we live in a manner worthy of the name we have received so that others may praise God for His transforming power.
Group Time

Introduction

READ the paragraph on page 121 of the DDG.

God repeatedly reminded Jacob of the promises He had made to his grandfather, Abraham, and his father, Isaac—promises that had been passed on to him. But despite these repeated promises and experiencing God’s faithful provision, Jacob was still a flawed man, a schemer and a deceiver. Instead of resting in the promises of God, he took matters into his own hands time and time again. But along with the promises God had given Jacob, He was also at work transforming Jacob’s character.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

Why does one’s character matter so much to God? (a person’s character ought to reflect the character of the Creator; God’s promises of blessing the world are fulfilled primarily and ideally through people of godly character; the good news of the gospel ought to have a positive effect on one’s character or else the world will see no benefit to faith in Jesus)

EXPLAIN: Recap how Jacob failed to rest in God’s promises, and connect his struggles of faith with our own.

- Jacob took advantage of his brother for the birthright and deceived his father for the family blessing.
- God had promised to give Jacob a family, but he ended up taking on four wives.
- God had also promised Jacob the land and told him to go back home (Gen. 31:3)—where there lived a brother who wanted to kill him years earlier. What would he do? Would he take matters into his own hands again? Or would he trust God to do what He had promised time and time again?
- Jacob’s struggles with faith mirror our own struggles toward Christlikeness. We too constantly grasp to control the situations we face, especially those that make us anxious or fearful. We speak of an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving God who deeply cares for us and intimately knows each one of us. Yet like Jacob, at least at times, we seem to live as though that reality weren’t true. We too turn inward, trusting in ourselves to make things happen instead of waiting on God.

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we will see that God did more than just provide Jacob with a family and possessions; He was also faithful to be at work in Jacob. God was changing the patriarch—slowly but surely—as He positioned him for the task he had been given. We will see that in the same way, God is faithful to keep His promises to us and that we too are to respond to His gracious provision of salvation through demonstrating new life in Christ.
Point 1: Jacob’s old name reflects his flawed character (Gen. 32:24-27).

SAY: In Genesis 31, God told Jacob it was time to go back to the promised land, so Jacob sent messengers ahead of his family to speak with his brother, Esau, hoping to find favor with him. When the messengers returned, they reported that Esau was coming to meet Jacob—with four hundred men. So Jacob formed a plan to appease his brother and save his family. He sent them ahead of himself in waves until he was all alone, but he wouldn’t be alone for long.


24 Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. 25 When the man saw that he could not defeat him, he struck Jacob’s hip socket as they wrestled and dislocated his hip. 26 Then he said to Jacob, “Let me go, for it is daybreak.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” 27 “What is your name?” the man asked. “Jacob,” he replied.

EXPLAIN a few deductions regarding this event that can be based on the text of Scripture. Refer to the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 122) for a few of these deductions.

- First, after wrestling all night long, the “man” was able to deal a crippling blow to Jacob by dislocating the patriarch’s hip. This suggests that the “man” who wrestled with Jacob had great power.
- Second, Jacob vowed not to let the stranger go until the stranger blessed him. It seems that Jacob recognized something important about this “man”—whomever he was wrestling was his spiritual superior. Piecing these two details together, along with Jacob’s conclusion after the sun rose and with further input from Scripture (see Judg. 13:18; Hos. 12:3-4), it seems that Jacob’s opponent that night was God’s angel, perhaps even God Himself.

While we do not know how this wrestling match began, we know one of the outcomes was the crippling blow the “man” gave Jacob. But this blow was not a curse; it was a blessing, for now self-reliant Jacob would not be able to rely on his own physical prowess, if needed, to combat Esau. With that one touch, Jacob was brought low, and people in a humble posture are the ones God delights to do great things through.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

? How has God humbled you through circumstances to force you to rely more on Him? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)
EXPLAIN how God forced Jacob to confront who he was. Refer to the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 122).

The Lord dealt a second blow to Jacob that night. While this one wasn’t physical like the first, in many ways it was more devastating. It came when the “man” asked Jacob for his name and Jacob responded by saying his name out loud—the second blow.

Commentary: Jacob’s name has many similar meanings: “trickster,” “supplanter,” “heel-grabber,” and “deceiver.” As we have seen, Jacob’s past was littered with the manipulation and trickery of his own family. The fearful situation he was in that evening as he prepared to face his brother was a direct result of his life of deception. Jacob’s name was not happenstance; it reflected his nature and character—the core of who he was (for instance, see Gen. 27:36). And so, in asking Jacob for his name, the Lord was not seeking information but inviting Jacob to confess his character at last: “I am Jacob. I am a deceiver.” Up to this point, Jacob consistently relied on his namesake character in whatever circumstance he faced. God was going to do an amazing work with Jacob and Esau the next day, but Jacob needed his own moment of clarity first. So God paved the way for Jacob to meet Esau in complete humility, and it was humility that paved the way to reconciliation.

SAY: God required Jacob’s humility for something beyond just a family reunion. God was continuing His march toward blessing all of humankind with a greater reconciliation—one that would come through Jacob but not feature Jacob. God was still at work to make good on His promises to provide the One who would defeat sin and death and bring blessing to the world.

PACK ITEM 14: GOD’S COVENANTS: Use this poster to help group members fill in the blanks in their DDG (p. 122), which help to summarize the storyline through the Book of Genesis that we have covered so far.

What were God’s promises in Genesis, and to whom did God make them?

**Eve:** A son to one day crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15)

**Noah:** Never again to destroy the earth by a flood (Gen. 9:11)

**Abraham:** Offspring, land, and a blessing for the whole world (Gen. 12–17)

**Isaac:** Offspring, land, and a blessing for the whole world (Gen. 26)

Jacob needed to learn that God’s promises do not come about by our own strength and shrewdness but instead through God’s grace and power.
Point 2: Jacob’s new name reflects the grace God has shown him (Gen. 32:28-32).


28 “Your name will no longer be Jacob,” he said. “It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed.”
29 Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he answered, “Why do you ask my name?” And he blessed him there.
30 Jacob then named the place Peniel, “For I have seen God face to face,” he said, “yet my life has been spared.”
31 The sun shone on him as he passed by Peniel—limping because of his hip. 32 That is why, still today, the Israelites don’t eat the thigh muscle that is at the hip socket: because he struck Jacob’s hip socket at the thigh muscle.

EXPLAIN the significance of Jacob’s name change to Israel. (Refer to the following paragraph on DDG p. 123.)

Jacob’s new name marked a gradual process of change. In God’s wisdom, He gave Jacob the name Israel as an ever-present reminder of this event and God’s continuing work in his life. Jacob was a work in progress. The true source of strength, power, and provision in his life was God. It was time for Jacob to stop fighting against God for blessing in his life and instead fight alongside God as part of His plan to extend His blessing to the world.

Commentary: There are many different interpretations of the name Israel, although most have a similar meaning: “strives with God” or “God fights.” This was a fitting name for Jacob because this was the main lesson he needed to learn that night and to remember the following day as well as the rest of his life: Jacob may have seen himself struggling with other people—Esau, Laban, even his wives—but what Jacob needed to know was that his real struggle was never with another person; it was with God.

While the Lord does not speak His own name to Jacob, He does bless him. Jacob called this wrestling-match site “Peniel,” or “face of God.” The name memorialized seeing God face-to-face and having lived through the experience by the grace of God. God had lowered Himself, becoming as man, and wrestled with His creation to bring about spiritual transformation. In this case, Jacob was changed; he would greet his estranged brother as a changed man, physically maimed but spiritually renewed. But ultimately, the Son of God would lower Himself, becoming a man as one from Jacob’s line, and wrestle with sin and death to bring about redemption for the whole world.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

Why do you think God is content to rename Jacob in an instant but work to change his character over time? (so Jacob can continue to see the fruit of God’s work in his life throughout the rest of his life; the process of change over time promotes humility; this mirrors the justification and sanctification of the sinner: Christians are declared right with God through Jesus and then changed toward holiness through the Spirit)
EXPLAIN that Jacob’s new identity reminds us of our new identity in Christ. While we shouldn’t reduce Jacob’s wrestling with God to a mere one-to-one comparison with our own struggles with God, we can certainly see parallels.

- Some people can relate to Jacob’s name change because they too have chosen new names after trusting in Christ. For example, some Muslims will take on Christian names to replace their Islamic-origin names, such as changing Muhammad to David or John. However, as we can see with Jacob, there is something much more important than just a changed name—a changed identity.

- When we trust in the Lord for our redemption, we take on a new identity as a follower of Christ, the one who fights for us. From that moment on, we no longer belong to the patterns of this world or to our own selfish desires and interests. We are no longer traveling a path that leads to death and destruction. Rather, our new identity reflects that we belong to the Giver of life. We belong to the One who took on sin and death and defeated them by bringing life out of death. He brought redemption to the world by rising from the dead. He fought the ultimate battle for us and won the victory we could not win on our own.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

Thinking of a time when you’ve wrestled with God, what did you learn from the experience? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 123).

New Identity of the Believer: The believer in Christ is declared righteous on account of Christ’s perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. Anyone who is in Christ is a “new creation” in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive and progressing, becoming more and more like Christ.

Essential Doctrine “New Identity of the Believer”: When a person places faith in Christ, that person undergoes a fundamental change of identity. He or she goes from being an enemy under God’s wrath (Eph. 2:1-3) to being welcomed into God’s family as a beloved child (Eph. 2:19). The believer in Christ is declared righteous on account of Christ’s perfect life and substitutionary death and resurrection. No longer is the person a slave to sin, defined by past failures or present struggles. The person has been delivered from the realm of darkness and now belongs to the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13). Anyone who is in Christ is a “new creation” in whom the old, sinful self is passed away and the new, redeemed self is alive and progressing, becoming more and more like Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).
Point 3: Jacob’s new name reflects the task God has given him (Gen. 35:9-15).

SAY: The day after his wrestling match, Jacob met with Esau as a humbled and changed man, and he was reconciled to the brother he had wronged so many years earlier. God did this. He fought the battle for Jacob, and the victory was a beautiful end to strife and an important beginning to the nation of Israel. Jacob settled in the land of promise, and though he still faced struggles and trials (you will read about these in your daily devotions this week), he faced them with a growing spiritual maturity and a growing responsibility to the people of God. And then one day, God appeared to Jacob once more.


9 God appeared to Jacob again after he returned from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. 10 God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; you will no longer be named Jacob, but your name will be Israel.” So he named him Israel. 11 God also said to him, “I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation, indeed an assembly of nations, will come from you, and kings will descend from you. 12 I will give to you the land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac. And I will give the land to your future descendants.” 13 Then God withdrew from him at the place where he had spoken to him. 14 Jacob set up a marker at the place where he had spoken to him—a stone marker. He poured a drink offering on it and anointed it with oil. 15 Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

INSTRUCT: Ask group members to circle all the occurrences of the words “God,” “I,” and “will” in the passage. Encourage them to highlight any phrases that seem familiar based on earlier passages in Genesis.

EXPLAIN: Referring to the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 124), show how God renewed and expanded on His covenant promises to Jacob, again marked by his new name “Israel.” God had blessed Jacob before at this very spot (Gen. 28:10-22) and said that all the peoples of the earth would be blessed through him (28:13-15). But here God promised an assembly of nations and kings would descend from Jacob, presumably a means by which the world would be blessed.

God renewed and expanded upon the covenant promises He had previously given to Jacob, connecting them to his new name. The name “Israel” would continue to reflect the new path of Jacob’s life, a path that would lead him from a self-focused life marked by “Jacob”—“deceiver”—to one that clings to the covenant-keeping God who will bring about His staggering promises through “Israel.”

SAY: When God calls us to salvation in Jesus, He also calls us to bury our old nature. God is too loving, too kind, to leave us in these old places. So He wrestles with us—to break us and change us. And in doing so, we experience the same wondrous truth we see in Jacob’s story: Jacob’s past did not define him, and neither does ours.
EXPLAIN that for the second time in his life, Jacob set up a stone marker where God had spoken to him at Bethel and anointed that marker with oil. Same action. Same place. But a different man. Jacob as the deceiver, manipulator, and trickster did not build that second stone marker. Instead, Israel did. And the changes in Jacob’s life should encourage us to look for the changes God is making in our lives in Christ through His Spirit.

Commentary: The first marker was constructed by a man looking forward to making the Lord his God. The second marker was constructed by a man looking back, having made the Lord his God. As we have seen, Jacob was far from perfect, but through his weaknesses and struggles, Jacob was drawn nearer to God and molded in His image.

God works the same way in our lives. He takes us where we are and moves us to where He wants us to be. He intends for each day to be marked by change—sometimes incremental, barely noticeable changes and at other times deep-reaching rapid changes. At times we value the change, and at other times we resist it. This change can be painful. But as with Jacob, God is changing us to make us more usable for His mission—for His glory and our good. It’s not about our comfort; it’s about God’s calling.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 124), which connects God’s performing incremental change in our lives to our dying to self in following Jesus.

Jesus warned us that if we want to be His followers, we must take up our cross daily (Luke 9:23) and die to our old self (Rom. 6:6-8). When we die to ourselves, we position ourselves to be shaped by God into becoming who we are called to be: God’s image bearers in a world full of rebellion against Him. When God calls us to Himself, He calls us to follow Him on a journey, one where day by day He makes our old nature more distant and foreign as He also makes our new nature more vibrant and familiar. And though the journey is often a struggle, because of God, it is good.

INTERACT: Read the “Voices from Church History” quote; then ask group members the following question.

How have you experienced the struggle of faith and seen evidence of God’s goodness through it? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

“Do you know why many of us are not yet truly blessed? We have not yet been truly broken. Men throw broken things away, but God never uses anything until he first breaks it. You’ll never show me anybody who has been or will be mightily used of God who has not been broken. There is no blessedness without brokenness.”

–Adrian Rogers (1931-2005)
EXPLAIN that Jacob’s new God-given identity was both a privilege and responsibility, as is our new identity in Christ.

Commentary: Like Abraham and Isaac before him, God promised Jacob that He would bless him, make him a great nation, give him a land, and always be with him. Those promises were unconditional, and yet, this did not mean that God did not expect anything from Jacob. When God changed Jacob’s name to Israel, He was reminding the patriarch that being in relationship with the Lord is both a privilege and a responsibility. God was blessing Jacob for a reason. He was making him a great nation and giving him a land for a reason. He was with Jacob for a reason. And that reason was to be part of God’s grand redemption narrative—to be part of the line from which Christ Jesus would come.

Similarly, as Christians, our names have been changed. We now bear the name of Christ, and this name change is also a privilege and a responsibility. Our greatest blessing of salvation is not designed to end with us. We are to use our new identity in Christ and the power we receive from His Spirit to be agents of blessing to the world, telling others of God’s forgiveness of sin and transforming power. That is our mission.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 125), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because we have been given the new name of Christians, we live in a manner worthy of the name we have received so that others may praise God for His transforming power.

- What step of faith do you need to take in the name of Christ?
- How can your group encourage one another to find your identity in Christ and in Christ alone?
- In what area of your life do you need to bear the name of Christ more faithfully to bring glory to His name and tell others about Him?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, You are gracious to love us as we are in spite of our past failures and ongoing sins, and yet because You love us, You will not leave us as we are. By the power of the Spirit, You have transformed us and given us a new identity in Christ in which we are counted righteous and empowered for obedience. Help us to live on mission faithfully and accordingly with Your transformative grace. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 126-128), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 129) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Daily Study devotions in the DDG (pp. 126-128) help group members get into God’s Word for themselves. Encourage One Another (p. 129) helps group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 126-128) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

• Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.

• Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 1 as a part of point 1 in the session: When Jacob confessed his unworthiness of God’s kindness and asked God to rescue him, Jacob was where he needed to be; he was desperate and humbled before God.

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

• Day 3: “We cannot forget that while God is working on us, He is working on others too.”

• Day 4: “God designed us for community, and we are to strive to be an encouragement and blessing to others.”

Visit www.GospelProject.com/blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the DDG (p. 129) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using The Gospel Project in their groups.

• Encourage group members to help one another rest in knowing that no other name or identity defines them more than who they are in Christ.

• See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.
Point 1: Jacob’s old name reflects his flawed character (Gen. 32:24-27).

“Jacob struggled early in his life with his brother, father, and uncle Laban. He often resorted to deception and human schemes to achieve his own purposes instead of fully following and trusting God. Eventually Jacob’s heart changed. This time, he did not deceive but faced the challenge with courage. These verses show Jacob’s desire to be reconciled with his brother, Esau. He both prayed that all would be well and organized himself for the best possible result when he met Esau. We can learn two main lessons from this: We should seek to mend our broken relationships, and we must prepare with both prayer and organization. Although it is very difficult to ask for forgiveness from those we have wronged, we must ask God to help us overcome our pride and fear. We should also pray for the people we have wronged, so their hearts are prepared when we meet them. In addition to prayer, we must organize and prepare our approach. We should think about exactly the words to use in our reconciliation attempts, how to present ourselves, and which people to take with us. While reconciliation is God’s will for believers, it is not easy. Reconciliation requires willingness and determination, which God will readily provide if we ask him. If we do these things, reconciliation provides wonderful rewards.”

Point 2: Jacob’s new name reflects the grace God has shown him (Gen. 32:28-32).

“Jacob was the third person to be renamed by God, joining Abraham and Sarah (17:5,15). The patriarch’s inferior status is reflected in the fact that, unlike the divine being, who asked for Jacob’s name and got it, Jacob was unable to learn the being’s name. The renamed man now renamed the place Peniel—or ‘Penuel’—literally ‘the face of God,’ because he had seen God face to face and yet was spared from death.”
“Before Jacob continued on his journey to meet Esau, he named the place of his wrestling match Peniel (Hebrew, ‘face of God’) because he felt that he had struggled with God face to face and survived. As Jacob left limping, he was sure never to forget his encounter with God. It had marked him forever. Jacob had learned that God, not his own cunning resourcefulness, was the source of his blessings and well-being. Interestingly, the Jewish prohibition against eating the thigh muscle that is at the hip socket comes out of this life-changing incident as a way of honoring not only their ancestor Jacob, who became Israel, but also the Lord.”

**Point 3: Jacob’s new name reflects the task God has given him (Gen. 35:9-15).**

“This explanation of why God changed Jacob’s name to Israel does not contradict the original statement in 32:27-28, but reaffirms it. The two names are used interchangeably from this point forward in the book of Genesis.”

“God’s second statement emphasizes that Jacob is now heir to the divine promises first given to Abraham and then to Isaac. I am God Almighty. This is how God revealed himself to Abraham (see 17:1-2) and is the divine name used by Isaac when he blesses Jacob in 28:3. Much of God’s speech closely resembles what he says to Abraham in 17:5-6 and what Isaac requests for Jacob in 28:3-4. be fruitful and multiply. This instruction goes back to the very creation of humanity (see 1:28). A nation and a company of nations shall come from you. While Isaac refers to a ‘company of peoples’ (28:3), God’s comment reveals that he has more than the nation of Israel in view. Given the close connection with the divine promises made to Abraham, this seems to be a development of the idea that Abraham would be the father of many nations (17:4-6). kings shall come from your own body. The promise of royal descendants is first given to Abraham in 17:6. This royal theme reappears in Joseph’s dreams (37:6-10), showing that the ultimate fulfillment of this divine promise will come through Jacob’s descendants. The land that I gave (35:12). The divine promise of the land, which goes back to the call of Abraham in 12:1-3, is renewed to include Jacob and his descendants.”

**References**

WHAT’S NEXT?

Fall 2018  In the Beginning
Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job)
God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis)
God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)

Winter 2018-19  Out of Egypt
God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus)
God Provides for His People (Exodus)
God Receives Worship from His People (Exodus; Leviticus)

Spring 2019  Into the Promised Land
God Guides His People (Numbers; Deuteronomy)
God Gives His People a Home (Joshua)
God Delivers His People (Judges; Ruth)

Summer 2019  A Kingdom Provided
God Provides a King (1 Samuel)
God Provides a Godly King (1–2 Samuel; Psalms)
God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings; Ecclesiastes)

Fall 2019  A Nation Divided
God Speaks to His People (1–2 Kings)
God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)
God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chronicles; Prophets)

Winter 2019-20  A People Restored
God Sustains His People (Daniel)
God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)
God Prepares His People (Nehemiah; Esther; Malachi)

Spring 2020  Jesus the Messiah
Jesus Comes into the World (Luke)
Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels)
Jesus Among the People (Gospels)

Summer 2020  Jesus the Servant
Jesus the Healer (Gospels)
Jesus the Teacher (Gospels)
Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)

Fall 2020  Jesus the Savior
Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels)
Jesus the Savior (Gospels)
Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)

Winter 2020-21  The Mission Begins
The Holy Spirit Comes (Acts; Epistles)
Fundamentals of the Faith (Acts; Epistles)
New Life in Christ (Acts; Epistles)

Spring 2021  The Church United
Living Like Jesus (Acts; Hebrews)
The Sent Church (Acts; Epistles)
Don’t Forget (Acts; Epistles)

Summer 2021  All Things New
Paul in Prison (Acts; Epistles)
Facing Adversity (Acts; Epistles)
Jesus Will Come Again (Revelation)
For a story to be great, it must include a great beginning. The story of the Bible, which tells the true story of our world, is no exception.

In the Book of Genesis, we see God the Creator in all His majesty and goodness as He spins the world into motion and lavishes His image bearers with love. We have an “inciting incident” that introduces conflict into this good world, as the first humans raise their fists in defiance toward their loving Father and bring havoc into this peaceful paradise. But even here, we have a promise—God will make things right again. God will cover His people’s sins and crush their adversary. The rest of Genesis shows how even though sin spread throughout the world, God remained faithful to His promise to Eve, His promise to Noah, and His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Book of Genesis is a glorious and earthy tale of rebellion and redemption, of sin and salvation, of failings and faith. Here is a book that shows us who we are in our sin and who God is in His grace. May this study lead you to express gratitude for God’s love toward you and then extend His love to everyone who inhabits this world He has promised to restore.