

In 2004 some Canadian film-makers made a sci-fi movie called *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. ... It is the story of a young couple's method for dealing with painful memories. ... They turn to a company that uses a non-invasive... scientific procedure... to erase the memories of their relationship. ... The following scene is a commercial for the movie-maker's concept of a company that they featured in the movie.

The commercial begins with a doctor in a white lab coat with a stethoscope hanging around his neck... looking into the camera and saying:

*"Remember the Alamo. Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. But why remember a destructive love affair? Here at Lacuna we have perfected a safe, effective technique for the focused erasure of troubling memories."*

Computer images of brain scans are shown with a bright green graphic of the words "Revolutionary Patented Eternal Sunshine Procedure." ... A middle-aged woman... with her head just below a brain scan machine... is shown with a happy look on her face.

Another woman... with her head below the same machine... is shown with a pleased look on her face. ... *"Our patented, non-surgical procedure will rid you of powerful memories and allow you a new and lasting peace of mind you never imagined possible,"* the doctor says. *"Don't forget, with Lacuna, you can forget."*

Maybe the future holds that someone will invent such a machine. But I'm not sure that I would trust it. (When doctors first started doing lobotomies... wasn't THAT their goal...? You may remember the movie "One Flew Over the Coo-coo's Nest?")

God has His Own procedure for giving us peace. ... .. [ P A U S E ]

Author and Public Speaker... Michael Ramsden... talks about a seminar where the audience was asked to close their eyes and imagine peace. After a few seconds the audience was invited to share their mental pictures of peace. ... One person described a field with flowers and beautiful trees. ... Another person spoke of snow-capped mountains... and an incredible alpine landscape. ... Still another described the scene of a beautiful... still lake.

After everyone described their mental picture of peace... there was one thing common in them all — ***there were no people in them...***! ... Ramsden commented, "*Isn't it interesting, when asked to imagine peace the first thing we do is to eliminate everyone else.*"

God has His Own procedure for giving us peace. ... .. [ P A U S E ]

The moment of ***real*** peace in our lives... is rare and precious. ... It is that moment... when there is calm and ***assurance***. (LISTEN!) The peace that God gives is the sense that things are ***under control***... and life can be restored EVEN from a crisis... like a world-wide pandemic... the loss of a job (or other source of income)... loss of a loved one... or the loss of good health.

As we return to our study in Genesis... I am going to focus on ***God's control***... which... when we realize it... it provides a sense of real peace. It ***can*** be ours... each time we reflect on Him and give ourselves to Him in worship.

The lesson for us today... lies in acknowledgement of the way God works in our life. ... The lesson that He teaches us today... is about events and decisions we make... which may seem *insignificant* (at the time)... but they end up altering our entire life... and those around us – *forever!*

It is easy to read events of our lives as mere *circumstance*... or to dismiss things as of “*little*” or “*no* meaning.” ... Our tendency to do this... is what the essential lesson that God has for us in today’s passage... tries to prevent.

Now (of course) many things **are** mere coincidence. A lot of things that happen to us in the normal course of our day... do **not** have significant impact on our entire life. ... So... how can I be sure of knowing when there is a learning event before me...? ... [ P A U S E ]

This is what I will be addressing from our passage today. The key is: what kind of a focus on God do we have - (first in the way we read Scripture... and second in our own life)...? ... Whenever we read the stories of Bible characters (like Jacob)... *as the story of **God's work***... we are more likely to pick up on God's clues. ... And (LISTEN!) the person that looks at his/her personal life... *in the light of **God's work***... and places great emphasis on **knowing God**... will be more likely to see when God provides those special teaching moments. ... [ P A U S E ]

Now... before we return to where we left off... in our study of Genesis... I want to provide some background... by taking you all the way back... in Genesis... to chapter 15. ... This will significantly help us catch today’s lesson.

God was meeting with Abraham... (and I don't know if it was on a high mountain that overlooked Canaan... but it must have been a place where Abraham saw settlement after settlement of Amorites and Canaanites – everywhere!) “*THIS... is ours...?! First of all... God... I don't have any kids... and second of all... the land is already filled with inhabitants!*”

### **Genesis 15:2-8**

Now... notice that before God gives His answer... He directs Abraham to worship Him. Sacrificial worship plays a significant part in our hearing God.

### **Genesis 15:9-16**

This was God's plan that we see in our passage today working out. God would take Abraham's descendants out of Canaan for 400 years... to grow them into a mighty nation. ... And during that same 400 years (Genesis 15:14 says)... God will be judging all these Amorites and Canaanites that Abraham was looking at... (and who Abraham wondered about.) God said, “*I will be working with them*”... and He did. He left His witness in the land. At the end of the 400 years... we see that there was a priest *of the Lord* in Midian... named Jethro. (He became Moses' father in law.) There may have been other *servants of the Lord* – who were not related to Abraham... left behind in Canaan during those 400 years. (We know of Jethro and earlier we saw Melchizedek... and there *may* have been others.) But God gave the inhabitants of Canaan His light... which they refused... so God judged the inhabitants of Canaan... and gave the land to Abraham's descendants.

God knows the future! ... He works His plan out perfectly! ... And He is more than fair!

Now we are ready to turn to today's passage... where we come to the beginning of the fulfillment of all this. The fledgling little band of Abraham's descendants (70 in all) will go to the perfect place in Egypt... where they will have plenty of food for themselves and their animals – and not be bothered at all by the Egyptians... (until God stirs them to leave.) ... They will be able to grow into a mighty nation... and worship God freely.

### **Genesis 46:1-4**

As soon as Jacob had recovered from the shocking and wonderful news that Joseph was alive... he made the decision to move to Egypt. ... He not only wanted to live close to Joseph in his elderly years... but the famine was a devastating force that he had to face. ... If he stayed in Canaan... he would lose all he had... (his livestock, ranch, workers, wealth - and worst of all... he might lose the lives of some of his family.) ... Some of them might not be able to survive the threat of starvation.

Everything pointed to his going to Egypt... (everything just felt right)... as though it were the "no-brainer" thing to do. ... In fact... there seemed to be no other choice. ... Didn't his son Joseph instruct him to come? ... Wasn't it the wisest thing to do... in light of the continued famine in the land?

Isn't it something you or I would do? ... Pull out all stops... and go all out for it! ... Jacob looks as if that is what he is doing. But then he stops. ... Jacob stopped to seek assurance from God. He stopped at Beersheba.

This was where he had lived for so many years... when he was a child... before he had to flee from his brother Esau. ... Beersheba was the southern point of the promised land... once Jacob left Beersheba... he would be

leaving the promised land. ... Beersheba was the last place he could stop in Canaan... before he went into the desert... on the way to Egypt.

His childhood home would no doubt cause his thoughts to focus on his father... and the great promise God gave to Abraham and to Isaac. ... He had to have thought about how God had instructed Abraham to stay out of Egypt... and how Abraham had been in trouble down there. ... God had said the same thing to Isaac. ... So now the question on Jacob's mind would be... "*Should I go down into the land of Egypt?*"

Beersheba gave him pause for thought. ... He needed a little more encouragement than the invitation from his son Joseph... and the promise of provision from Pharaoh. ... He needed a green light from God.

It is essential that we seek God's will in the major decisions of life. One of the major ways to seek His will is to get alone to worship Him.... Exalt Him in song... meditate on His ways through the words of good Christian music... and pray... and ask Him to show you exactly what you should do.

How many Christians today go through the entire week and leave God pretty much out of their life program. They make their own decisions and do what they want to do. (Let me ask...) How often did you... this very week... ask for God's direction on an important matter...? ... Did you make any crucial decisions on your own...? ... We so often come to church on Sunday morning ...and then tell God "*good-bye*" as we get in our car and drive away. The rest of the week God is not in the picture. "*I'll take it from here, God. It's all no-brainer stuff...*"

Scripture says:

### **Proverbs 3:5-6 (ESV)**

<sup>5</sup> *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.* <sup>6</sup> *In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. .*

Jacob wanted Divine direction about going to Egypt... and here he sought God earnestly for that direction. Jacob worshipped. (Again... we must see how central this is to our hearing God.) After He worshipped... God spoke.

The first thing He said was “fear not!” When new situations or surroundings frighten us... we need to recognize that experiencing fear is normal. ... But to be **paralyzed** by fear... however... is an indication that we question God's ability to take care of us.

God identified Himself: "*I am the true God, the God of your father [Isaac.]*" The Hebrew here is **the true God** (Ha'el). *El* means "*the strong one.*" With the article [Ha] it means: "*the one who especially deserves the name.*"

Not only did God give Jacob permission to go to Egypt... but “*The Strong One – Who deserves the Name*”... also gave Jacob some very encouraging promises. ... The promises were fourfold.

**First**... was the promise of **posterity**. "*There I will make you into a great nation.*" ... In Egypt Jacob's family would not be swallowed up by another people and disappear... but there would be a huge population explosion of Israelites.

**Second**, the promise of His **presence**. "*I myself will go down with you to Egypt.*" “*The Strong One – Who deserves the Name*” is coming with him. ...

This must have brought memories back to Jacob of his earlier dream where he saw angels on a ladder going up and down from Heaven to Earth.

**Third**, the promise in prophecy. “*I will also bring you up again.*” ... Under the leadership of Moses... 400 years later... Jacob was indeed brought back to Canaan for burial.

**Fourth**, the promise of prospects. “*Joseph’s hand shall close your eyes.*” Jacob will have fellowship with his son until he dies. That ended up being seventeen years later.

### **Genesis 46:5-7**

When we read Genesis 45:20... we saw that Pharaoh told them to never mind your stuff... just leave it! But they didn’t... did they? Jacob took along enough of his possessions so that it would not appear that he was coming to Egypt as a beggar. And besides – if he left any of his flocks behind... they would be abandoned in drought conditions and all die. (Good choice... Jacob!)

But verse seven stresses the point that all of his descendants came with Jacob into Egypt. There is a three-fold emphasis in this one verse alone that EVERYONE came. And then... the author of Scripture emphasizes this face to a greater degree... with the next 19 verses where he names them all. ... I wont embarrass myself by trudging through and slaughtering many of these names. (I do enough of that in front of my college classes on the first day... when I have to call roll. ... And every term seems to get more embarrassing with names I’ve never heard before.)

But let me read to you J Vernon McGee’s response to this list of names...

*Why are these lists of names given to us in the Scriptures? Doesn't God have more important information to give to us? My friend, there is nothing more important than our Lord Jesus Christ, and this is the genealogy that leads to Him. We will find some of these names in the genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew, at the beginning of the New Testament. Again, we will find some of these names in the genealogy given to us in Luke, chapter 3. These lists of names are important for that reason.*

At this point in time THIS was all there was... of those God would turn into a nation of His people! The author of Scripture wants us to see who would become a blessing to the entire world... from a mere 70... to more than anyone can count... (unless you are able to count every star and every granule of sand on the seashore!)

So let's drop down to the verses that follow this listing of names....

### **Genesis 46:28**

Judah had gained Jacob's confidence... by his care of Benjamin... when all the sons went to Egypt. ... Judah sacrificially offered himself as a slave... in the place of Benjamin. ... Judah had made some huge mistakes in his past... but he had repented... and done such a 180 degree turn-around... that of all the brothers... Jacob trusted Judah to go on ahead to make preparations. ... The author of Genesis gives us another glorious hint of God's plan... when Judah's name emerges as the one who leads the family of Jacob to Goshen. (You see) A future Son of Judah will become the ultimate leader of the nation... He will be the King of Kings... through Whom all the families of the earth will be blessed.

### **Genesis 46:29-30**

From the moment that Joseph was sold into Egypt... every word spoken by Jacob is in relation to his death. ... As age and sadness continue to dominate Jacob's mind... the talk of death becomes more prominent - even with the glorious reunion with Joseph.

There is a lesson that we might take from this. ... First... it should be noted that Jacob has focused on his death for **twenty-five** years. And there will be **17 more years** of life remaining for him. ... Now... Jacob's last 25 years have been a life of emotional pain. We might be able to understand his obsession... with wanting to die.

But it is not uncommon for older people to think that age or circumstances predict that death is very near... when... (in reality)... there may be many more years **still left**. ... Many aged people have much to offer family and loved ones... if they would find the mental focus to consider life... (even though there is hardship)... as still worth living. None of us can know for certain the moment of death. ... Even when we are old... there are reasons to consider **productivity in our life**. ... When God is our focus... He can help us re-create our productivity - **in ways that our declining bodies can handle**.

### **Genesis 46:31-34**

With the family of Jacob arriving in Egypt... Joseph must secure the place that the family can grow. ... The family of Jacob must develop into the nation of Israel. The place in which they dwell needs to allow for a lot of **isolation** where this family will not get swallowed-up and assimilated into Egypt... and their false gods.

Joseph's plan is to place Israel in Goshen... a very fertile area (very suitable for the keeping of sheep) and yet the least desirable place for an Egyptian to dwell.

In order to get Jacob's family to Goshen... the brothers are rehearsed by Joseph in the proper way to reply to Pharaoh. ... “*Tell him that you are shepherds...*” It will work... because of the Egyptian's revulsion of shepherds. Shepherds have to move around and continually be with their sheep. They can never settle down and dwell in a city. They are nomads... and this was disgusting to a cultured Egyptian. ... [ P A U S E ]

I simply cannot keep myself (any longer) from going back in Genesis... to show you how perfect God's hand has been marvelously bringing His people to this wonderful situation. (It was all I could do to refrain from showing you this at the beginning of this message.) ... God has had a (long-term) brilliant plan all along – just as He does for your life... and for mine!

To show you... I take you back to Lot's choosing the plains of Sodom all the way back in Genesis 13. Abraham allowed Lot to choose. He said, “*If you go right... I'll go left.*” ... Lot ended up giving up life as a shepherd and became a permanent resident of Sodom. He valued culture... just like the Egyptians. ... But Abraham and his descendants remained nomadic shepherds.

Abraham and Isaac... were forced to move continually... and Isaac had to dig several new wells... guaranteeing his nomadic state. ... Jacob was made to be continually on the move... as well. ... The sins of Jacob's sons forced their leaving Shechem (whose residents they deceive and

slaughtered.) ... And now... the famine has brought Jacob's family of despised shepherds to Egypt... (the land of plenty) where the family will be left alone... to become a nation. They will not get involved with the Egyptians in the matter of worship... or inter-marriage. They will be kept distinct – exactly what God wanted all along!

God's sovereignty manifested itself in many ways. Even the sins of Jacob's family could not prevent God from implementing His perfect divine plan. ... As shepherds... the move into Egypt was done without conflict.

God knew exactly what He was doing. ... Do you ever look at the world as out of control? ... Consider the story of Genesis. ... [ P A U S E ]

Oswald Sanders has written: "*Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God.*" ... But sometimes... you have to train your eyes to look for it. ... Do you see the presence of God in your life...?

God is present... and God is in control. ... When we discover this... it provides a sense of real peace. ... Peace can be ours... Reflect on Him... and give yourself to Him in worship. ... He has even been in (what you thought were) "inconsequential decisions" that you have made.