



**GENESIS**

*Grace from the Beginning*

**9/10 December 2017**

**Vol. 39, No. 50**

## Why We Have This Mess in the Middle East

*Genesis 16*

### **English Services**

*(8 & 10:30 a.m., & 5:30 p.m.)*

Prelude  
Call to Worship  
Worship through Praise  
Baptism (*Morning services*)  
Worship through Fellowship  
Worship through Giving  
Worship in Music  
Scripture Reading  
Worship in the Word  
*Pastor Larry Pabiona*  
Benediction

### **Filipino Service**

*(3 n.h.)*

Paghahanda  
Tawag sa Pagsamba  
Pagsamba sa Pag-awit  
Pagkilala sa mga Bisita  
Pagsamba sa Pagbibigay  
Natatanging Bilang  
Pagbasa ng Salita ng Diyos  
Pakikinig sa Salita ng Diyos  
*Pastor Erik Dizon*  
Pangwakas na Panalangin  
at Basbas

*See inset inside for the **Traditional Service (Sat., 6 p.m.)** program.*



# Why We Have This Mess in the Middle East

Today's Message (9/10 December 2017) /  
*Genesis 16*

FAITH IS LIVING  
WITHOUT  
SCHEMING. WHEN  
WE IMPATIENTLY  
TRY TO “HELP  
GOD OUT” IN OUR  
OWN STRENGTH,  
IT ACCOMPLISHES  
NOTHING AND  
MAY EVEN DELAY  
THE TIME UNTIL  
HIS PROMISE IS  
FULFILLED.

US President Donald Trump caused a firestorm recently when he recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. This riled up collective Arab sentiment against him, though in fact, many prior US Presidents had made the same vow but never kept it. This decision inflames the Arab world because it means America recognizes Israel's claim not only to be a legitimate nation—which many of them still do not accept—but also because Arabs see Jerusalem as the capital of Arab Palestine, not Israel. Why do we have such a mess in the Middle East?

It goes back to the days when the region was called the “Ancient Near East” (ANE). A pilgrim from Ur, whose faith in God was credited in lieu of human righteousness, had just been promised ten years earlier a son. But still there was none. And so the machinations of the human mind tried to “help God out,” and so now we have the mess in the Middle East.

Here you will see how grace preserves not just God's covenant people who faltered, but also the underdogs victimized by the failings of God's people. Note the contrasts:

## 1. THE SEEMING FAILURE OF A DIVINE PROMISE, AND THE ACTUAL FAILURE OF A FAITHLESS PLAN (VV. 1-6)

### a. The seeming failure of God (vv. 1-3)

- God is given the blame for preventing Sarai from conceiving, and His name is invoked to justify her point of view. But He is never sought. Abram didn't bother to ask the Lord whether this crucial decision, which would affect the rest of his life and the rest of human history, was God's will.
- Why didn't God stop Abram? Abram didn't bother to ask the Lord for His counsel. God won't step in and prevent His children from making some serious mistakes if they don't seek Him.

### Traditional Service

(Saturday, 6 p.m.)

Prelude

Call to Worship

Worship through Praise

Worship through Giving

Worship in Music

Doxology

Worship through Fellowship

Scripture Reading

Preparatory Hymn

Worship in the Word

*Pastor Larry Pabiona*

Response Hymn

Benediction



# Why We Have This Mess in the Middle East

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## b. The actual failure of Abram and Sarai's plan (vv. 4-6)

There is plenty of blame on all sides. Everyone is guilty of something here. But the greatest sin was Abram's.

- He was the head of the family: Pressure + Passiveness = Problems!
- He could have and should have said no in the first place.
- God had spoken directly to him, not Sarai.
- No one made him sleep with Hagar.

## 2. THE TEMPORARY ESCAPE OF A **DESPERATE PARENT**, AND THE PERMANENT BLESSING OF A **FAITHFUL PROTECTOR** (VV. 7-21)

### a. The temporary escape of a mistreated mom-to-be (vv. 7-9)

- The safest place for any Christian is in the center of God's will. Strange as it sounds, it was safer for Hagar to bear Sarai's mistreatment in the will of God, than to be out in the desert and outside God's will.
- It is not always God's will to relieve our suffering, but rather for us to submit to it in faith, believing that his promises are greater than our pain.

### a. The permanent blessing of a faithful Protector (vv. 10-16)

- Between Sarai and Hagar, it was Hagar who was the first to receive an angelic message: "you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery." Ishmael ("God hears") would always remind her of the Lord's attentiveness to her misery.
- It was at this point that Hagar realized she wasn't alone after all. God was not powerless; He was in control of everything. He was aware of her suffering, of her despair, of her impending pregnancy. He had already named her child and ordained a future for him. Hagar's story was not ending; it was only beginning. A realization that God is in control of your situation is the antidote to despair.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

In the end, whatever we do on our own must come to a bad end eventually. As Scottish novelist George MacDonald said, "In whatever man does without God, he must fail miserably, or succeed more miserably." Abram and Sarai were about to miserably succeed. And now we have this mess in the Middle East.

So please remember this: Faith is living without scheming. When we impatiently try to "help God out" in our own strength, it accomplishes nothing and may even delay the time until His promise is fulfilled. Live without scheming about God or men, and who knows? The promise may come sooner than you think ■

## EMBRACING THE NEXT GENERATION

Growing up in a church is a blessing. While some young people may resent it, I at a young age welcomed it. It serves as a constant reminder of who I really am in Christ and who I was with, God's family. It kept me grounded so that whenever I would leave the four walls of the church, I would remember the world out there is not my home. The world will not welcome my faith and beliefs. The world will hate me for my convictions. But the world needs me to tell them of God's love and His plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. I struggled many times; but because the church took care of me and equipped me, I learned and kept on learning to overcome my fears of standing up for my faith and sharing my faith.

I thank God for GCF because this church invests on young lives. I am a recipient of a good Sunday School program. I was discipled and cared for by dedicated men and women. I was equipped through the faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word. I was given opportunities to serve. I was surrounded by Christian friends who struggled with me but also journeyed with me through the ups and downs of life. Because of these, going to full time ministry after I graduated from college was not a hard decision to make. There was the overflowing desire to give back and serve the church.

God has blessed me with the opportunity to lead the Youth Ministry for a good number of years, and to witness young people make decisions for Jesus is an exhilarating feeling beyond compare. Decisions made during the teenage years greatly contribute to how they will live as adults. Presently as Ministry Programs Directress, God has allowed me to serve alongside my former Sunday School students who are now pastors, leaders, and even missionaries because this church equipped them and loved them.

We may put labels in how we describe the youth of today. But at the end of the day, every youth of an era or generation, needs to be loved and to be equipped with God's Word. It's a balance of accepting them for who they are, not judging them but seeing their potential by teaching and correcting them with love and giving them opportunities to grow, helping them make a difference and embrace who they are in Christ.

The future is bright for GCF because the next generation is here. Let them lead. Take a step back. But don't just watch them. Guide them. Like how Paul instructed Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12, "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" ■

# Ablaze Devotional

**The true light, which  
enlightens everyone, was  
coming into the world. -**

John 1:9 (NRSV)

The coming of the Messiah parallels the beginning of all creation. In the beginning God spoke light into being but now we see a new beginning in which the Creator manifested Himself as created. The true light has come into the world. The divine became human, eternity entered the temporary.

Advent is a time of devotion, joy, and expectation of Christ's coming. It celebrates God's arrival and presence on earth. It is a season remembering His coming into the world. It is also a time of looking forward to His return when He shall come in His kingdom and bring peace to earth. And more so, it is about celebrating His coming into our lives. We rejoice in the truth that God is making His power and love known in and through us.

May this season move us to rejoice in God's presence in our lives, continuing in our obedience and devotion. May we bring the light of Christ to whatever season He places us. As we open our hearts for Him, may it shine the true light that will enlighten people into the love of God. We move forward in hope that we shall soon meet Him face to face. Being transformed and being His witnesses, we declare that His kingdom shall rule forevermore ■

## GCF PRAYER GATHERINGS AT THE CHAPEL:

**The GCF Hour of Prayer**  
*Tuesdays, 6-7 a.m.*

**Midweek Prayer Service**  
*Wednesdays, 7-8:30 p.m.*

## Ministry Opportunities + Other Announcements

### GCF FAMILY CONFERENCE

Today after the 10:30 a.m. service  
at Auditorium B | *Open to all official members of  
GCF included in the church roster*

### ELECTION OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

*Election Days: December 16 and 17 (Sat. and Sun.)*  
**Early voting is on-going.** Ballots are available at  
the Ministry Information Booth.

### SPECIAL CHRISTMAS SERVICES

*featuring "He Shall Be Called"*  
December 16 (Saturday): 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.  
December 17 (Sunday, **two services only**):  
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 nn. and 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

### CHRISTMAS' AND NEW YEAR'S WEEKEND SERVICES SCHEDULE

December 23 & 30 (Saturday): 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.  
December 17 & 24 (Sunday, **two services only**):  
10:00 to 11:30 a.m. and 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.

### STEWARDSHIP REPORT:

*November 2017*

	November Budget	Received, Nov. 1-30
General	7,514,328	6,380,442
Missions	825,500	920,503

  

	Jan. - Nov. Budget	Received, Jan. to Nov.
General	91,848,066	74,305,793
Missions	9,080,500	9,447,793

### *Flower* Ministry

*The flowers this week are given with  
praise and thanksgiving to God  
for His love and faithfulness by  
the Basilad family and the Nuñez  
family.*

Please call 632 1354 to 56 for  
inquiries on how to participate in  
this ministry.

*Would you like to read our weekly church bulletin on your mobile  
device? Just sign-up with your e-mail address at the Ministry  
Information Booth at the lobby and we will send it to you.*





## Love God, love others.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

JJ Tirona's first priority when he arrived in Singapore as an Overseas Filipino Worker in 1997 was to find a home



church. He found one when members of a local church went house-to-house, inviting people to join them. He became part of that loving community and got involved in the ministries.

He has come and gone as an OFW with his family in tow and his priority was always to find a local church and be active there. This time he is in the process of preparing to go to a post-communist country where there are hardly any evangelical churches. His wife, Evangeline, told him that they should go plant a church where there is none. It is because of this that they both joined a mission agency to become bi-vocational missionaries.

As JJ waits for his I.T. Specialist work visa, he and his family are getting trained for missions. Please pray for them ■

*You may also bless others by sharing your own shepherding or discipleship journey in loving God and in loving others. You may e-mail your story to [lifejourney@gcf.org.ph](mailto:lifejourney@gcf.org.ph).*

**ON THE COVER:** Orthodox Jews pray at the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest site, in the Old City area of Jerusalem ([pixabay.com](http://pixabay.com)). Jerusalem is considered as the or one of the holiest cities in three Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The politico-religious tension that this coexistence breeds, especially between Jews and Muslims, has frequently spilled into violence. Consider praying: Psalm 122:6—"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

## Join a GROWTH GROUP

### HIGH SCHOOL & COLLEGE Y-GROUP

Sundays, 9:30-10:30 a.m.,  
and 4:30-5:30 p.m.  
At GCF (Youth Center, 6th flr.)

### ICU (Intimacy Care Unit) GG

*for Couples aged 30 up*  
Saturdays, 4-6 p.m. at GCF (Rm. A109)

### GREEN MEADOWS GG

*for Couples aged 40 up*  
Every other Thursday, 8-10 p.m.  
at Green Meadows Subdivision

### NEW GG (GATHERING CONTACTS)

*for Single Men aged 21-30*  
Tentatively scheduled on Sundays,  
3-5 p.m. at GCF

### YACIES TUESDAY GG

*for Single Men and Women aged 30 up*  
Tuesdays, 7-10 p.m. at GCF (Rm. BM07)

### SPORTS GGs (THREE GROUPS)

*for Boys aged 11 to 18*  
Saturdays, 12 nn.-3 p.m. at GCF Multi-  
purpose Gym (6th flr.)

### Pass by the GGEX (Growth Group Express)!

Sundays, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Room B123  
Get a feel of what a Growth Group is  
like before you participate in one. Come  
and join us!

*If you are interested in joining any of the small groups above, fill out the tear-off form inside this bulletin, drop it in the offering bag or submit it to the Growth Group booth at the lobby. For more information, you can text or call us at 0917 532 7740.*



## Greenhills Christian Fellowship

Know Christ and Make Him Known

Ruby cor. Garnet Roads, Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1605  
Tel. Nos. 632 1354 to 56, 635 0078 to 80, 635 0082 to 83 | Fax No. 632 1357  
Mobile No. 0920 961 2964, Mon.-Fri., 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.  
E-mail: [email@gcf.org.ph](mailto:email@gcf.org.ph) • Website: [www.gcf.org.ph](http://www.gcf.org.ph)

# How may we SERVE YOU BETTER?

Fill-out this tear off form and drop it in an offering bag/box or at the Ministry Information Booth. Please check all that is applicable:

- ☐ I am a first-time guest.
- ☐ I prayed to receive Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord today.
- ☐ I would like to know how to become a Christian.
- ☐ I am interested in becoming a member of this church.
- ☐ **I want to join a Growth Group.**  
(Specify age group: \_\_\_\_\_)  
(Specify group composition: \_\_\_\_\_)
- ☐ I want to start a Growth Group.
- ☐ I want to host a Growth Group.

Please share with us some information about yourself:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_ Landline no.: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile no.: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Year of membership: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Growth Group (if you already have one): \_\_\_\_\_

*Today is **9/10 December 2017**, and I attended the 8 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 3:00 p.m., 5:30 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. (Sat) (encircle the time).*

Write below *any* inquiry or prayer item that you want to ask or share.

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For hospital or house visitation, dedication service, or funeral service requests, please call or text 0917 532 7794.

# God's Way to Heaven

## THE GOSPEL

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."  
(1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

## THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

**God is holy and righteous:** "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). **He requires holiness of us as well:** "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

## THE TRUTH ABOUT MAN

**Man is sinful:** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).  
**Sin demands a penalty:** "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

## THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRIST

**Christ is the expression of God's love for us:** "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). **Christ paid the penalty of our sins and died for sinners:** "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Peter 3:18). **Through Christ, God offers man reconciliation:** "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:18).

## WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

**Believe and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior:** "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

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**PRAYER:** Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner. I believe that you died on the cross in my place, to save me from my sins, and I accept you as my Savior, and the Master of my life forever. Amen.

## Need someone to talk to?

Visit the Emmaus Road Counseling Center at the GCF Mezzanine floor or contact 632 1354 to 56, 635 0078 to 80 or 0917 532 7794 for inquiries.