



Primer

GUIDEBOOK



Introduction

Why should you care about stories?

We know that stories have great influence on the way people view the world. Solomon used proverbs to communicate wisdom. Jesus used parables to convey timeless truths about the Kingdom of Heaven. Aesop used fables to teach morality in ancient Greece. Stories matter. They not only engage our minds, but affect our hearts and can shape our souls. As responsible parents, we know that you want to meet the people who tell your child stories.

The history of the world is an amazing, rich, textured, complex story with a cast of billions that spans millennia. In simplifying this story for your young child, you will be giving him merely an introduction to its major characters and themes. We have tried to guide you by making key decisions about what to include and what to exclude.

What storyline do we follow?

We believe that human history is a story told by an Author, and that this Author is also the Creator of humanity. We unapologetically use the Bible as our primary resource for ancient history. We follow the story of God's people from Creation through the establishment of the Church—the spiritual heirs of Abraham and the family of God. While we introduce other cultures with whom the Israelites interacted (Egyptians, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans), we do not do a global survey of ancient civilizations in *Tapestry Primer*. (By contrast, *Tapestry of Grace* does provide this deeper study over the course of a full year in the Ancient World.)

After the establishment of the Church, we follow the history of the western Church. While the Eastern Roman Empire has a rich history, and while developments

were happening all over the world (and, again, *Tapestry of Grace* includes these), we stick closely to the clash of ideas that was worked out on the stage of Western Europe. Here, the gospel of Christ alternatively shaped and challenged the rulers of the day. In the West, we see the development of foundational ideas that are still influencing our world currently, and we set the stage for the American chapter of world history.

We want students to understand their place in history. Since *Tapestry Primer* is written for very young American children in the twenty-first century, our *Guidebook* takes you across the Atlantic and focus on the birth and struggles of a new nation on the continent of North America. Specifically, we focus on the British settlements: each of the thirteen original colonies had its own story. For the students, we focus more on daily colonial life and the fact that colonies were different from one another in significant ways.

The Civil War in America was a key moment in the history of the Union, and we spend plenty of time studying that conflict. After we wrap up that story, we will remain focused on American history. We follow America out onto the world stage as our country is pulled into world wars and launches into outer space and cyberspace.

Therefore, we include major conflicts of the last century: the two world wars, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Space Race, and increasing globalization. But even while we introduce these events, our main focus is not these stories. We feel that these may be either too heavy or too complex for little people. Rather, we focus attention on daily life and on the inventions and discoveries that helped shape these events, though we do offer you some more details about these wars. We leave to you the decision of when and how to explain these major conflicts and events to your child.

What themes do we emphasize or avoid?

The history of our world is a history of broken beauty, of a battle waged in a garden, and of God's mercy amidst necessary judgments for wrongdoing.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He made all things good. He created mankind to live in unbroken relationship with Himself, while working, tending, stewarding, and enriching Creation as a bearer of the image of God, for God's glory.

Mankind fell. Seeking to glorify ourselves as the bearers of God's image rather than God Himself, we pursued our own glory and pleasure—with disastrous consequences. Our fall affected all of Creation and subjected it to His righteous judgment.

Yet God did not abandon or destroy His work, but promised to redeem and restore it.

God reached out to restore mankind. For a while, people humbled themselves. After humility came honor. But after honor came pride. And pride came before the fall. In history, we see this pattern repeated again and again. Mankind seeks for good outside of God and fails to find it.

Along the way, mankind has done evil; people everywhere have exercised unspeakable cruelty toward each other. We address this inescapable reality in our overviews of the stories for teachers, hopefully providing a redemptive perspective on the pain. For the children, we do not emphasize the dark chapters of history. This isn't to say that we avoid all conflict or struggle, but we don't emphasize the more tragic moments.

We do emphasize the unalterable fact that history is not random or pointless. The course of history remains in the hands of its good, wise, and powerful Creator, who will sovereignly direct history toward its conclusion in the full redemption and restoration of people so that they live in loving relationship with God, while working, tending, stewarding, and enriching the new heavens and the new earth, with Christ ruling as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

But still, battles are exciting! Along the way, the clash of ideas on the world stage is a fascinating study. For teachers, we highlight the major movements and conflicts of ideas as they come and go, rising and falling in their turn. We also watch as people, made in the image of God, exercised their creative powers by inventing tools. At times, these tools have changed their world, as we'll see in the story.

Our "Topic Overviews" expand on these themes. We want to help you, as teachers, make connections and remember ideas that may have gotten a bit dim over the years. We hope that this survey course reminds you of your history in a way that surprises and intrigues you!

If you find yourself wanting more, remember that this is only a survey of the full *Tapestry of Grace* program, which offers the homeschool family a high-quality humanities education, or can simply guide you with resources that you can use to dig deeper into the fascinating story of which we are all a part. We encourage you to take advantage of it for yourself!

Who are the “central characters” in our story?



The Author

God, the Author of life, created all things. Although He delegated authority to people as His representatives, He maintains absolute authority. We trace God's actions, as seen in Creation, the Fall, and our redemption through Jesus Christ. We trace authority as power shifts over the ages.



People

People, created in God's image, are key actors in the story. We introduce young students to the great characters and stories of history that they will study again and again. We show the movements and clashes of their ideas over time.



Good

When we were created, God blessed us and called us good. We were made in God's image to do good works. Sadly, we often seek to redefine good. The question, “What is good?” is often present in the story, influencing the actors.



Evil

Evil entered when we sought good outside of God's will. Sadly, we have not yet stopped finding evil when we seek good outside of God. Without emphasizing evil, we recognize that the story has a villain. Often, it is us. To God's glory, He saves us from our deception and depravity.



The Word

The Word of God, His revealed will, shapes history. God created the world by His word and revealed Himself through His Word. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Promise, Covenant, Law, Incarnation, and Scripture shape history as we either respond to God's Word or rebel against it.



God's Creation

Creation is the stage on which God has chosen to act out history. At times, this supporting character takes center stage. Events in history are affected by the places in which they occur. We learn to appreciate where history happened.



Man's Creation

People create tools as we exercise our role as God's image bearers. Over time, civilizations have been empowered or endangered by the tools we have made. We observe these inventions and discoveries as they occur, noting the shaping influences they have had on daily life.

Overview: Mini-Unit 1

Eden to Egypt

Introduction

Tapestry Primer guides your family on a journey through the history of the world in one (or two) years, and we start right at the beginning. As we mentioned in the introduction, we will be following seven main characters throughout our study of history. We meet each of these characters right away.

In this first unit study, we study Creation to Moses' birth in about 1600 BC. Our first topic sets the scene, covering Creation through the Flood and the Tower of Babel. The second topic follows the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) as God chose them as His people and called them to the Promised Land. Finally, our third topic explains how God's people came to be living in Egypt. These stories explained who this one God was, why He had chosen them, and how they came to be slaves. This story mattered to the Israelites. But, before we begin the story, let's pause to remember why the story matters to us.

Why History Matters

There's an old saying: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Christians believe, in a way that other people do not, that history matters. To the atheist, history is a series of accidents and coincidences that somehow got us this far. To the Buddhist or Hindu, history is an illusion to be transcended. Jews and

Muslims believe in a God who rules over history, but only Christians believe God entered into it Himself in the form of Jesus of Nazareth. We believe that history really is “His Story.”

Over the course of the year, if you believe it is appropriate, your child will be exposed to some ancient myths and legends. These myths are a part of our common culture, but they may raise troubling questions. Ancient people believed all these stories about their gods. Are the things we believe about God just myths, too?

There is a solid, satisfying answer. As you study history, mythology, and Scripture, you can see for yourself that the Bible is *different*. The myths are stories about powerful, immortal, but ultimately human-like beings who lust and lie and cheat and steal, whose love is generally selfish and selective, and who treat their creations in whimsical, self-serving ways. Even a child can see that they are made in man’s image. In the Bible, by contrast, a holy God reveals Himself as Someone who is wrapped in absolute strength and beauty, unapproachable except on His own terms, yet loving generously at cost to Himself. As it turns out, studying myths is one way to understand who God is and why He deserves our worship.

Opportunities to compare the Bible with ancient myths are part of why history matters. Through historical studies, we can begin to see who He is and what He desires of us. Let us hear the old stories with new ears as we rediscover our history along with the people of God.

Scripture is History

There are two overarching points to emphasize throughout this unit. One is that history matters. The other is that Scripture is real. We will spend this first mini-unit learning to understand the oldest history book in the world. It is called Genesis, and was authored by Moses.

Can you guess why God picked Moses to write Genesis? Why not Adam, Noah, or Abraham? We don’t know for sure, but the days of Moses were certainly an important time for a history lesson. Abraham’s covenant with God was a dim centuries-old memory (much longer than America has been a nation). Yet, that covenant was the basis for their identity as a culture. As we read in the Bible, the reason that God sent the Israelites into bondage in Egypt was to preserve, through the pressure of being strangers (and then slaves), their unique cultural status.

One reason that God inspired Moses to write down the Genesis account was probably to teach these Israelites their history, all the way back to the beginning. They

needed to know that God is the Creator who made and owns everything. The idols of Egypt were not the truth, but there was unity of purpose in Heaven and on earth! The Israelites needed to know about sin and disobedience, which was the true reason for strife on earth. They needed to know that God had a good plan for them—one that had been in existence from the beginning—and that they could trust Him.

From the Beginning to Babel

This story has an **Author**. In this mini-unit, we'll learn how God created the world by his **Word**. He planted the Garden of Eden and created **people** to work and keep it. People were created **good**, and to do good. This paradise didn't last long. Battle was quickly waged in the garden. Satan, who desired to injure God's glory, tempted Eve to seek good outside of God's will, relying on her own sense of good and **evil**. In rejecting what God defined as good, Adam and Eve fell, and sin entered the world. Cursed justly, our first parents were driven out of the Garden. All seemed lost! But, though people had fallen, God was neither defeated nor done. In the same breath as the curse, He gave us the incredible promise of future redemption.

Since Creation would not yield food easily after the curse, people had to eat by the sweat of their brows. They exercised their gifts as image-bearers of the Creator and fashioned **tools** to make work easier. People learned to domesticate animals, cultivate crops, make tents, forge metal, make musical instruments, construct boats, preserve knowledge through written languages, build towers, translate languages, establish trade, and amass wealth.

Yet people also continued to do evil. Cain murdered Abel, committing the first act of inhumanity toward a fellow man (and that man was his brother!). It would not be the last. As a whole, mankind became so depraved that God repented of having made it and resolved to destroy Creation and begin again.

But Noah found favor in the eyes of God. By faith, Noah built the Ark and was saved, along with his family and the seeds of a new creation. After people and animals emerged from the Ark, God promised that He would never again destroy the world with a flood. He set His rainbow in the heavens as a sign of His promise. Yet, although those who had practiced evil were destroyed, sin still dwelt in the hearts of all human beings. Before long, people would again seek their own glory outside of God's good plan, refusing to fill the earth and choosing instead to build a tower to the heavens so that they would not be divided. Ironically, God brought judgment against this arrogance by breaking their language at the Tower of Babel. After this, man's fall was complete, and people—separated by language—began to scatter over Creation in

accordance with the plan of God Almighty.

A Chosen People

God created mankind to live in fellowship and relationship with Himself. Throughout the story of the Bible, we see God taking the initiative to restore and redeem what humans have broken. After mankind was divided at Babel and the separated peoples scattered, God took the initiative to call one group to be His own Chosen People.

In Genesis 12:1-3, we read that 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. And 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. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Abram’s journey would test his faith. Childless until he was a century old, and later homeless except for his beloved wife’s tomb, Abram wandered the land that God promised He would give to his descendants. Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Yet, his belief was not without moments of doubt or self-sufficiency. He was not sinless. He deceived rulers about the true nature of his relationship with Sarah, and he fathered Ishmael, initiating millennia of conflict. God chose Abraham and made His covenant with him. Abraham chose to obey God, and did not withhold his only son, whom he loved. God mercifully provided a substitute so that Abraham’s son would be spared. There would be no substitute for God’s son.

Isaac was the child of the Promise. For a time, it seemed like God would visibly fulfill His promise in Isaac. God wonderfully provided a bride for Isaac and they quickly had twins. Certainly, God was about to fulfill His promise to make Abraham’s descendants a great nation! However, the story is more complex than that.

Isaac’s sons, Esau and Jacob, grew up in conflict with one another. After Jacob tricked Esau out of his birthright, Isaac’s family was threatened with one brother’s vow to murder the other. It might have been Cain and Abel all over again. Evil was still present in the hearts of Mankind.

Of all the patriarchs (ruling fathers), Jacob may have seemed the least likely to fulfill God’s Promise. Deceitful, selfish, and manipulative, Jacob tricked almost every member of his whole extended family over the course of his life, and was himself deceived multiple times: by Laban, by Rachel, and by his own sons. Yet, God revealed

Himself to Jacob—first at Bethel and then at Peniel. After his divine wrestling match, Jacob, the trickster, was lamed and renamed Israel, which means “Triumphant with God.” Jacob settled in the land of Canaan that God had promised to Abraham. Jacob’s twelve sons eventually became the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Egypt: Gift of the Nile

We could almost end the story there. Abraham’s descendants are living in the Promised Land. God has kept His promise, hasn’t He? Not quite. God promised to make Abraham’s descendants a great nation, not just another nomadic tribe. To do that, they needed to grow in numbers and retain both their ethnic purity and unique religious identity. If you read Genesis closely, you’ll see that Jacob’s twelve sons endangered God’s plan through bickering, self-centeredness, and ethical compromises. The knowledge of God was not flourishing among them!

This situation sets up an amazing story of how God the Author works for our good according to His Word, even in the midst of human sin and evil. In the story of Joseph, an arrogant young man antagonized his brothers, who then intended to kill him. Instead, though, they sold him into slavery and lied to his father (leading Jacob to believe Joseph had been killed by a wild animal), filling both Jacob and Joseph’s life with sorrow. Yet, God was at work! After years of sorrow and toil, God raised Joseph to the position of the governor of all Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh. Then God sent a famine to Canaan.

Rather than use his power and authority to seek revenge on his brothers, Joseph forgave them and gave glory to God. He told his brothers, “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20). (This is a fitting summary for so many events in history.)

Joseph was able to provide a place for Israel to grow, and grow they did! The Bible tells us that, because they were shepherds, they were culturally distasteful to the Egyptians, and so were given good land *and* isolation. This circumstance was a means God used to keep Israel ethnically pure.

After a couple of centuries’ sojourn in Egypt, Israel had grown enough to be a serious threat to Egypt’s pharaohs. A new dynasty arose between Joseph and Moses. A new Pharaoh saw the numerous, non-Egyptian Israelites as a threat and began to oppress them as slaves, hoping that hard labor and ill treatment would curtail their numbers. Instead, Hebrew slaves were resilient, and their focus was concentrated on a promised redeemer. When the pharaoh saw that enslavement had not accomplished his ends, he commanded that a whole generation of Israelites be thrown into the Nile

to appease sacred crocodiles.

Our mini-unit ends with Moses being saved from the dangers of the Nile and being raised in Pharaoh's palace. In the next mini-unit, we'll follow Moses into the desert of Midian, where he encountered God in a way that would change all of history.

Mini-Unit 1, Topic 1

Topic 1 Overview:

From the Beginning to Babel

“In the beginning... God.”

This week, we begin to retell the story of how a loving God spoke the world into being, filled it with good things, and gave it purpose. It's the story of how the people God made chose to worship and serve created things, rather than their Creator. It's about how the creature wanted to be like God, with disastrous consequences. Sadly, the story of mankind is a story of flawed creatures trying to replace their flawless Creator with gods made in their own likenesses, instead of embracing their role as those who glorify and enjoy Him, bearing His matchless image and stewarding His creation.

Yet, against this pitch-black backdrop, God's plan of redemption sparkles. This week we have two wonderful examples of how God remembered mercy in the midst of deserved judgment. First, in Genesis 3, we read about God's promise of a Savior. Then, in Genesis 9, we read about God's renewed covenant with the creation after the judgment of the Flood. Already, we are being introduced to the characters, the conflicts, the climaxes, and the conclusions that we will see played out again and again in the context of history.

These chapters were written to give God's people the knowledge of who they were and where they came from. They tell a different story than the ones that the Israelites

would have heard in Egypt. Just as they needed to know God's truth about their beginnings, so we and our children need to know. We also need to know who God is so that we may walk with Him.

With that brief overview, here is more background on what we're studying this week.

Background to the Exodus

Genesis was written to encourage and instruct the people of Israel. Remember, these people were not a tightly-knit nation yet. They were a rabble—a mixed multitude of Israelites and other people—many of whom had forgotten where they came from. The Egyptians, who as a people considered foreigners to be almost sub-human, probably wanted the Israelites to believe they had always been slaves.

While the Bible doesn't condemn slavery as an economic institution, slavery always comes across as a powerfully *negative* symbol in Scripture. The Old Testament is full of references to slavery, especially when Israel reaped the consequences of idolatry and apostasy. The New Testament uses the image of slavery over and over. Romans 6:20 tells us we were slaves to sin. Romans 6:22 says we are God's slaves now. In Mark 10:44, Jesus says, "Whoever would be first among you must be slave of all." Yet Galatians 5:1 says, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." So, slavery is a significant biblical concept, and it is especially important to realize that when God sent Moses to bring His people out of Egypt, they were *slaves*.

Let's put the slavery of the Israelites in perspective. The Israelites were in Egypt for something around 400 years.¹ Four hundred years before 2014, the first English-speaking colonies were just being established in the New World. That's a long time ago! Some Israelite families must have passed on the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to their children. We assume that Moses' and Aaron's parents told them all about Adam and Eve and Noah. But there were doubtless many Israelites who had forgotten their heritage, especially as they were surrounded by other beliefs.

Genesis was God's answer to that problem. It taught the mixed multitude how God created man in His own image to enjoy fellowship with Him in the world He created. It explained where sin and sorrow came from. It told how God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia, and that He promised to give him a land of his own and more descendants than the stars of the sky. It was hard for Abraham to believe that when his

1 There is lively debate among scholars as to whether to date the 400 years that Scripture mentions from the covenant God made with Abraham, or from the time when Israel went down into Egypt to live.

wife had turned 90 and he still didn't have a son, but the Israelites could see for themselves how that part of God's promise had come true. That made it easier for them to believe in the other half: the Promised Land really did lie beyond their sandy horizon.

So, it is easy to understand why Moses wrote Genesis 11-50. We'll be studying those chapters over the next three weeks. This week, though, we want to consider why Moses wrote the first few chapters. How would those chapters particularly affect the slaves who had just escaped Egypt?

Some Lessons of Genesis 1-11

Let's take a specific example. Remember the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4? Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd. That doesn't mean a lot to us—we mostly remember that God accepted Abel's offering and rejected Cain's. But their occupations would have mattered a lot to the Israelites. When Joseph's brothers arrived in Egypt, they told the Egyptians that they were shepherds, and Genesis 46 tells us that "every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians." But way back in Genesis 4, God was telling His people that He accepted them even if other peoples despised them.

What about the Flood? We've all heard the story of Noah and the ark—but we haven't heard it through the ears of people who could still remember the screams of Pharaoh's army as the Red Sea swept them all away. You can make a lot of new connections by reading Genesis with an Exodus perspective!

The Tower of Babel was another foundational story for God's new people. Egypt was one of the major centers of civilization. The Israelites would have seen and heard people from many different lands coming and going. They themselves had come from Canaan and spoke a different language than the Egyptians around them. In Genesis 11, Moses explains that the differences between the peoples were established by God. Moses also connected the Israelites to where they were in the family tree. The Tower of Babel was built by Ham's grandson, Cush. Another of Ham's sons was named Egypt. To us, they are places on a map. To the Israelites, they were people groups. Through these stories that Moses recorded, God was helping His people see themselves as He saw them—separate and holy from the other peoples around them.

God wanted the Israelites to learn some important lessons from the stories of Genesis 1:11. Here are just a few.

- ☐ God is one, not many. (There is no strife in Heaven between many gods.)
- ☐ God has a plan that has been going on since the dawn of time.
- ☐ All of nature is subject to the One who made it.

- ☐ Man is unique in all creation, made in God's image.
- ☐ God made man to be holy and happy.
- ☐ God designed people for both meaningful work and pleasant rest.
- ☐ Death (which is better defined as eternal separation from God than the cessation of physical functions) is a perversion of God's perfect plan.
- ☐ Disaster strikes when people think they can gain what is good and avoid what is evil when relying on themselves instead of their Creator.
- ☐ God preserved His chosen people even in judgment.

The Egyptians had a radically different worldview. They had their own set of ideas about deities, man, work, rest, nature, sin, and death. So do our secular neighbors. It seems likely that God gave the Israelites Genesis partly in order to give them (and us) a whole new worldview.

The Genesis Overture

The first chapters of Genesis contain a lot more than just six days of Creation. Creation matters because so much of our faith is introduced in the telling of this tale. Genesis is to history what an overture is to a musical: it introduces, in one medley, snatches of songs that will be fully expressed in the context of the story later on. Genesis introduces themes of love, truth, beauty, and justice which we will follow down through the ages. The opening chapters of Genesis contained the world's first history, mystery, romance, thriller, and documentary.

Romance

Genesis included the very first love poem: Adam said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23).

Adam and Eve enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God and with each other in the Garden. Their unfallen love for each other was holy and undefiled. Over the course of history, we'll have lots of opportunity to study how fallen men and women interact. Men and women have treated each other badly since Genesis 3, when Eve disobeyed the clear teaching of God through her husband, and Adam tried to blame Eve for his own wrong choice.

Government

When humans sinned, Adam's relationship with Eve changed. Genesis 3:16 says,

“Your desire shall be for [this could be accurately translated as “against”] your husband, and he shall rule over you.” Before they sinned, Adam’s authority over Eve was not a burden, but after the Fall, the God-ordained flow of authority was corrupted. We’ll be studying different ways that sinful men have ruled over sinful subjects in culture after culture.

Economics

One of the consequences of Adam’s sin was that work became a hardship instead of a joy. We’ll be studying economics (which goes hand-in-hand with work) through the ages. So many people view work as a curse, but if we start with Genesis, we see that meaningful work is part of God’s original plan for humanity. Eden was a garden, not a resort. The curse has made human toil difficult, and sin complicates economics, but despite all this, work remains a fundamental part of what we were made for.

Conclusion

Genesis directly contradicted the Egyptian worldview. It contradicts the secular modern worldview, too. When we get to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we’ll study one ideology after another in light of what we find in Genesis. As we work our way through the secular notions that shape how many of us view humanity today, we’ll keep on seeing how relevant these first few chapters really are! Your student may not be ready to make these connections yet, but you’ll appreciate seeing how God has woven His truth through all time.

Mini-Unit 1, Topic 2

Topic 2 Overview:

A Chosen People

Introduction

In Week 1, we saw our first Parents¹ disobey God's one command. In response, God judged humanity—He drove us out of the Garden of Eden, away from the Tree of Life. Men tried to get around that judgment by building a Tower whose top would reach to Heaven. God intervened again by confusing the tongues of humankind, dividing people by language. Thus were we divided from one another and separated from God—a bad way to start human history! Fortunately, that is not the end of the story.

This week, we'll learn how God initiated a plan of redemption that would ultimately overcome His righteous judgments of mankind's sin. Out of many fallen nations, God chose one man, Abraham, to found one holy nation through which all the peoples of the earth would be blessed.

We'll be reading a lot of Bible stories this week, and Genesis is not always G-rated. We've tried to select stories that are age-appropriate, but read through them yourself to make sure that you're comfortable discussing them with your student. We have

¹ Children may ask why we today bear a sin nature because of the choices of our first parents. It is because our Parents were both our representatives before God and our progenitors. In the same way, Jesus Christ stood once for us all and bore our sin so that we would be righteous before God and receive resurrected bodies one day, if we are found in Him. (See Romans 5:12-21.)

recommended that you use an age-appropriate storybook Bible to communicate the basic point of the story and introduce the characters. Don't worry if you don't go to the Bible itself at this age; remember, you'll be back.

One of our goals is to help your student understand that these were real people who lived real lives in real places. Throughout this program, we'll study a number of different cultures. Take the time to imagine what it would be like to live at this time along with your student.

Canaan

Great ancient civilizations grew up on the major river systems such as the Nile and the land between the rivers called Tigris and Euphrates. The land of Canaan has just been a blob on the map—at the most, a place set smack on a trade route from one great empire to another. That blob would become the Promised Land because God called one man out of Mesopotamia to start a whole new nation.

Abram

That man was Abram. As far as we know, he began life as a pagan. He grew up in a wealthy family in the city of Ur near the mouth of the river Euphrates. He may have been a moon-worshipper, since archaeologists believe this cult was strong in Ur, Abram's hometown. Ironically, though his name means "exalted father," at the start of our story he had no children.

Abram's father, Terah, led the family to Haran, a city far up the Euphrates River from Ur. In Genesis 12, God tells Abram to leave the land between the rivers. God made Abram a promise—actually, a whole series of promises. God said:

- ☐ He would make Abram a "great nation."
- ☐ He would bless him.
- ☐ He would make his name great and famous.
- ☐ Abram would be a blessing.
- ☐ God would bless whoever blessed Abram.
- ☐ Whoever cursed Abram would be cursed.
- ☐ God would bless all nations through Abram.

Those are seven promises—big, hard-to-believe promises. The amazing thing is that Abram responded in faith, demonstrated by leaving his home and heading off to Canaan.

Covenants

In Genesis 15, God increased His blessings on Abram. We read how God made His earlier promises into a covenant. What is a covenant, exactly? Covenants are like contracts, in some ways, but very different in others. In a contract, two people make promises to each other. I promise to you \$100, for example, and you promise to paint my porch. The promises in a contract depend on each other: if you don't paint the porch, I don't owe you anything. A contract can be ended at any time if both parties agree to it.

A covenant, by contrast, consists of mutual promises that don't depend on each other. The most familiar example is a marriage—at least, an old-fashioned marriage. If a man promises to love his wife and she promises to love him, those promises are still binding even if one party or the other fails to keep them. Your spouse's failures do not let you off the hook—and vice versa. Under a covenant, your obligation to love your spouse is just as binding as it ever was even if your spouse wrongs you.

When we make marriage vows, we promise to be faithful to each other “until death do us part.” Jesus prohibited divorce, with one exception: the case of adultery. Does that mean marriage is a covenant unless one person commits adultery? Not really—under the Old Testament law, adultery was punished by death. Adultery didn't turn a marriage covenant into a marriage contract: it ended a marriage because one party had been put to death.

Covenants were common in the ancient Middle East. The Hebrew word for making a covenant is to “cut” a covenant, because one common covenant ritual was to slaughter an animal, cut it in half, and then both parties of the covenant would walk between the pieces of it and articulate their promises. The implication was, “May God cut me in half like this cow if I break my promises to you.”

What's amazing about Genesis 15 is that God appeared in the form of a smoking firepot and a flaming torch that moved between the pieces of Abram's sacrifice while Abram looked on. God was the only one walking between the pieces of the sacrificed animals. As far as Old Testament scholars can tell, God was telling Abraham, “Let me be cut in half like this cow if I violate My promises.” Verse 18 of that chapter says, “In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.”

The Israelites in the wilderness knew this covenant-making God who appeared as a smoking firepot and a flaming torch to Abram—they followed His pillar of smoke by day and the pillar of fire by night.

Doubt

It's good news for people that a covenant is binding even if one party fails to fulfill its obligations, because Abram was far from perfect. Scattered through the book of Genesis are stories of his shortcomings. Genesis 12, 16, and 20 describe the problems his doubts caused. Just ten verses after God called Abram in Genesis 12, drought struck Canaan. Abram picked up and went to Egypt, outside the land that God was giving him. That's a problem, because God called Abram to trust in Him, not to trust in other things in other places. Later, in Genesis 20, Abraham lied to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, because he was afraid that men would kill him to get his beautiful wife. He was still trusting in human tricks, not the power of God—yet God demonstrated His power once again by revealing those tricks while still protecting Sarah.

The most lasting damage done by Abraham's doubt appears in Genesis 16, where Sarah persuaded him to take her Egyptian maid, Hagar, to bear a child for her. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, who grew up to be a mighty chieftain, head of twelve tribes in Arabia. Ishmael's descendants are with us to this day—and the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews may well be the world's most lasting example of sibling rivalry.

Sin

When people try to make God's promises come true by their own actions and in their own preferred time frame, instead of waiting on Him or obeying Him, they sin. We're still dealing with the consequences of Eve's desire to "be like God" and Abraham's effort to make God's promises come true in the time frame he thought appropriate.

Throughout this year, we'll be following one particularly dark thread through the tapestry of time: the thread of evil, seen in man's sin. What does the word "sin" mean to your child?

We define the term "sin" broadly to include any case where men or women seek to find what is good and/or to avoid what is evil independent of God. Humans were created to be dependent on God, not independent from Him. Eve sinned by desiring to be wise apart from God. Adam sinned in seeking to avoid separation from Eve, after she had eaten the forbidden fruit but before he had eaten, by disobeying God and choosing to join her in her sin. We can point to many such examples. This definition of sin may help your student identify sin more clearly in his own life.

Given this understanding of sin, Abraham's great virtue consisted of believing God and following His direction towards righteousness. Abraham's failing consisted

in trying to get hold of what he perceived as good without God's help.

Faith

We can learn a lot about sin and doubt by studying Abraham, but that's not what he's famous for. On the contrary, Abraham is famous for his faith. In Genesis 18, the Lord comes down to earth to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. But then He said:

“Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.”

If there is any one verse that fathers ought to memorize to keep on track for homeschooling, this may be it. “I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has promised him.”

Why did God want Abraham to do these things? “So that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has promised him.” God is eager to bless us—it seems He is more eager to bless us than we are eager to be blessed! But our doubt and disobedience get in the way. When we put our faith in something other than God, the promises are on hold—for God will not share His glory with another.

Isaac

Isaac was the child of promise. Isaac's birth was both miraculous and a tangible sign of God's commitment to His Covenant. Imagine how Abraham felt when Isaac was born! And, imagine how he felt when God asked him to sacrifice his one and only son! The philosopher Kierkegaard suggests in his essay “Fear and Trembling” that the reason Abraham “rose early in the morning” to take Isaac to Moriah for the sacrifice is because Abraham had been up all night, dreading the next day. Now, imagine Abraham's relief when God provided a substitute sacrifice.

After Sarah's death, God's gift of Rebekah as a wife for Isaac is a beautiful example of His providence at work. This week's lessons might offer a good chance to tell your child about your own love story, and how God led you and your spouse to find each other.

In Genesis 26, we see God clearly affirming His promise to the next generation of Abraham's descendants by speaking directly to Isaac. We also see God's clear direction that Isaac was *not* to go down to Egypt (unlike Abraham). Point out this difference as you read the stories. It's amazing how God planned the time and place where His people would enter the Egyptian world.

Jacob

God passed down His covenant to Jacob, promising to him the land that He had promised to Abraham, and foretelling that kings would descend from Jacob (Genesis 35:11-12). A good deal can be understood about the meaning of Jacob's story from the patterns in the plot.¹

From Jacob, we learn that God is really the primary actor and initiator toward people. God foretold that Jacob would be the child of promise, and then God appeared to Jacob and gave him the promise, though Jacob had not deserved this favor or sought God. God is the one who made the sovereign choice. God chose Jacob, not Esau. In the book of Romans, Paul uses this mystery when explaining God's attitude toward those of us who have come to know Him.

Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. (Romans 9:11-12)

Jacob's story also helps us understand that sin is real. People sinfully try to oppose, distort, or accomplish God's will in their own strength, but “our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases” (Psalm 115:3). There is a recurring pattern in Jacob's story:

- 1) Sin on Jacob's part (especially trickery), which leads to ...
- 2) Bad consequences and Jacob being in fear for his very life, followed by...
- 3) God intervening and drawing Jacob to himself.

This happened three times, and it would seem that in the end Jacob at last learned to trust God, for he said at the end that God was his Shepherd throughout his life.

¹ Given the age of *Tapestry Primer* students, we do not read or discuss Jacob's and Laban's patterns of deception, Jacob's two wives, or Jacob's wives' slaves (concubines) in detail. It's your choice whether you want to introduce your student to these characters and concepts at this point, or cover them later when your student is older.

This pattern in Jacob's life is both an echo of Abraham's behavior (for instance, in trying to bring about the promised child with Hagar) and a picture of the future history of Israel—sin, God drawing the people to Himself, and the people's repentance and trust.

Another theme is that of basic morality. From Jacob's story, we learn that sinful human striving and deceit is wrong. Every time Jacob tried to get ahead by cheating or deceiving, he experienced negative consequences. As Jacob tricked his father and others, so his sons tricked the men of Shechem and Jacob himself. And we note that sinful human favoritism always causes problems in the family.

It is a right relationship with God that is good and leads to right living. After Jacob worshiped God at Bethel the second time—and made his final decision to follow God wholeheartedly—there were no more records of him cheating or deceiving others.

From Jacob's story, the Israelites would learn something about what they should value. After living most of his life valuing earthly advancement and success, Jacob at last valued God as his Shepherd and Redeemer. Also, the Israelites could learn that the value God places on people is not always according to human expectations. Isaac blessed his younger son Jacob above his older son Esau (albeit by deception), and Jacob blessed Joseph's younger son Ephraim above his older son Manasseh (purposefully). So, God lifted up Egypt's slaves to be His chosen nation.

Conclusion

Abraham is called “the father of everyone who believes,” but it's not because his faith was unailing. Perhaps he's the father of everyone who ever cried, “Lord, I believe—help my unbelief!” Abraham is a complex character, with strengths and weaknesses like our own. This is one way the Bible is so different from so many other religious books: it tells the failings of its greatest heroes as well as their strengths. God's faithful ways with Abraham provide real spiritual guidance for our children—and for us.

In the same way, Abraham's descendants were real people. While we do not dwell on their character deficiencies in detail at this level of learning, there is much that we can learn as we return to these characters in more depth over the years. Ultimately, we can see clearly that God is the Author of this story and that He is working to accomplish His purposes through His people.

Mini-Unit 1, Topic 3

Topic 3 Overview:

Egypt: Gift of the Nile

Introduction

This week, we leave the direct Biblical accounts and transition into our study of the history of the world of Egypt. Almost everybody knows something about Egypt—think of sand and camels, pyramids and mummies, and the Nile River flowing through it. Although we all know a little about Egypt, the more you learn about it, the more amazing it is. Civilization emerged in Egypt about 5,000 years ago, around 3000 BC, and thrived for more than two millennia. It is easily one of the most enduring civilizations in history.

If all you are studying is history, Egypt can seem a little dry. Centuries roll past without a lot of changes. But if your whole family wants to integrate studies with history at the heart, Egypt is hard to beat. Remember, our emphasis with our students is on learning about daily life.

This week, we spend a lot of time on the Nile River and Egyptian geography, understanding how the story of history was played out on the stage of the created world. We'll also spend a bit of time on the history of Egypt. The key people to meet are Joseph and Moses, who had two very different experiences with two very different pharaohs, as God set the stage for the deliverance of His people (in foreshadowing of

the gospel to come). This grand story was being played out against the backdrop of daily life.

Geography

Egypt is a land of stark contrasts, where geography really matters. Tell your child that it isn't hard to find, even on a globe—all he has to do is look for the big continents (Africa and Asia), and then find the place where the seas almost come together. The Mediterranean Sea comes within just a few miles of Red Sea at the Suez Canal. If your child can find that spot on a globe and then look for the big river, he's found the Nile. Find the Nile and you've found Egypt!

There's more to geography than just finding places on a map, though. Geography deals with how people interact with places. Your student can see that for himself as he traces the blue ribbon of the Nile through the African desert. That steady supply of water made human habitation possible. Interestingly, the annual floods produced by rainfall in the highlands of central Africa washed a rich soil downhill so Egyptian fields in the lower lands didn't get exhausted by continuous farming. Nowadays, we have fertilizer and understand the need for crop rotation. The Egyptians didn't, but that didn't matter. God provided for them, and they just waited for their river to rise each year. Where there's plenty of food, there will be plenty of people—and plenty of people can cause plenty of trouble.

In ancient times, walls protected people from each other. If you look around the world at ancient cities, what you'll find are city walls—because one village was often the worst enemy of the one next door. However, Egypt had very few walled cities! Egyptians had something better than walls—they had deserts that were hard for invaders to cross in large numbers. Particularly in the south, you'll want to point out the Sahara Desert. The Sahara was smaller in ancient times. Today, it is big, and it's still growing: currently, it is bigger than the United States. It stretches all the way across Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. That vast expanse of sand is broken by the ribbon of the Nile. Though it wasn't as large 5,000 years ago, it was big enough to keep out invaders from the east and west.

With a stable food supply from the river and protection from most enemies, the early Egyptians developed flourishing communities along the river. Villages grew into cities, and cities became kingdoms. When one kingdom finally became strong enough to rule the entire valley, the Egyptians enjoyed remarkable security.

The Nile

Get ready to learn along with your kids—that’s the secret of full-family education. Did you know that the Nile flows “up”? It flows up the map from the south. It’s the longest river in the world, at more than 4,000 miles long. The Nile is a great topic for kids with good imaginations. The Egyptians built boats out of bundles of papyrus reeds. Imagine yourself paddling downstream, past riverbanks crawling with crocodiles, as hippos snort in the shallows. Flocks of ducks and geese explode out of the marshes as lions roar in the reeds by the river. Hungry hyenas follow the lions, hoping for scraps.

Yet all this life was hemmed in on either side by hundreds of miles of desert.

Abundant Food Supply

The abundance of life near the river gave rise to one of the world’s oldest, and most sophisticated, civilizations. Indeed, in the Bible, Egypt is symbolic of both the allure and the powerlessness of worldliness!

We will spend two weeks learning about Egyptian life, but this week let’s just concentrate on the relationship between the river and human habitations. The river was so vital that Egypt has been called “the gift of the Nile.”

Your child may not understand how important this river really was. It’s easy to see that it provided drinking water, but the Nile provided something else that was just as important in the long run—mud.

It may sound crazy, but mud made Egypt great. Each year in summer, heavy rains soaked the high mountains of Ethiopia, far to the south. The saturated soil flooded into the Blue Nile, which carried the silt all the way downstream. Eventually, much of this Ethiopian soil wound up in the great Nile Delta, which bulges out into the Mediterranean.

Along the course of the mighty river, as the waters receded from Egyptian fields each year, the flood left hundreds of miles of mud. That mud was fantastic fertilizer, which caused the crops—and the population—to grow. In one sense, the mighty civilization of Egypt started with mud.

Here’s a point worth noting: when the Israelites left Egypt, they wouldn’t have been prepared for the challenge of farming a land that wasn’t re-fertilized every rainy season. The crops in Canaan would have exhausted the soil after a few years of farming. God had something better for His people than mud and floods, though—He gave

them His perfect law. In Leviticus 25:4, God commanded His people to let the land rest every seventh year. This biblical crop rotation provided wisdom the Israelites never would have learned along the fertile banks of the Nile.

Specialization

Egypt's rich food supply and stable government resulted in increasing specialization. Specialization happens when people do not have to work hard to feed themselves and have time enough to develop skills in different areas, purchasing the labor or goods from others. In ancient Egypt, there were potters, jewelers, weavers, perfumers, miners, sailors, shoemakers, butchers, and kings.

We will be learning more about the government of Egypt next week. For now, it is worth noting how many people with special skills the royal family employed. Chapter 40 of the book of Genesis tells how Joseph met Pharaoh's chief baker and butler while he was in jail. We take jobs like butlers and bakers for granted, but the division and increasing specialization of labor is a big part of what makes a civilization a civilization. In Egypt, there were a number of experts in the royal family's employment, such as architects, scribes, accountants, and musicians (just to name a few).

In addition to the Egyptians' plentiful peace and prosperity to make trade and commerce profitable, they had positional stability: they did not need to migrate to follow herds as hunters, or flocks as shepherds. All of these factors resulted in the many specialized jobs.

When people barely make enough to live on, they don't get much opportunity to specialize. Everybody is just trying to survive! When people can specialize, though, they tend to develop new tools and skills that make it easier to grow more food and keep their enemies at bay. They also create works of art and large public buildings. These endeavors lead to more people, more trade, and more specialization and production.

Throughout our study of history, we will see civilization after civilization rise—and fall—and we will keep pointing out three things you need to have a civilization: a stable food supply, a strong central government, and safety from outside enemies. Where these three things are present, civilizations tend to rise. When they cease to be there, civilizations fall.

Egypt developed scientifically, as well. With so much of their lives depending on the annual flooding of the Nile, they paid attention to the passing of the year. They realized there are just over 365 days in a year, although they had a different way of

counting them than we do. (Their calendar had twelve 30-day months with five extra days tacked on at the end.) Their enormous building projects required them to come up with ways to measure areas, volumes, distances, weights, and so on. Egyptian doctors understood a lot about the human body in general, while some experts devoted themselves to one medical specialty or another. The Egyptians doctors kept records—something that was unheard of in any other culture at the time.

One special “class” in Egypt (if you can call it that) was that of slaves. The Bible gives us a front-row seat on Egyptian slavery in Genesis and Exodus. This week we will study the lives of two men who spent large portions of their lives immersed in this Egyptian culture.

Joseph

Parental guidance is needed for the story of Joseph.¹ There is foreshadowing (hinting at what will come later on) throughout Joseph’s story. Besides the obvious examples of the prophetic dreams and Joseph’s interpretation of them, there is also a more subtle theme: Joseph was thirty years old when Pharaoh made him the overseer of Egypt, and through him both the Jewish nation and also the Egyptian nation were saved from famine. Can you think of another Jewish man who began to minister at the age of thirty, and through whom both Jews and Gentiles were saved from a great calamity? The difference is that Joseph gave earthly bread that kept people alive during a brief famine, whereas Jesus gave His own flesh as the bread of life to save us from the greatest calamity of all: separation from God.

The foreshadowing continues at the end of the story of Joseph, when Jacob is reunited with his son in Egypt. On his death bed, Jacob prophesies, “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his” (Genesis 49:10). This prophecy was fulfilled by Christ, who was born into the line of Judah and is sometimes referred to as the Lion of Judah.

The amazing truth about prophecy in the Bible is that when God foreshadows an event, He then brings it about in actual history, using real people. He is the first and greatest Author, who hints in the beginning what He will reveal at the end, giving prophecies and pictures of the coming of Christ and His triumph. Only a God of infinite wisdom and power could promise something at the beginning of time and

¹ Given the age of *Tapestry Primer* students, we leave it to you to carefully consider whether or not to read or discuss Potiphar’s wife’s attempted seduction of Joseph. If you want to explain how Joseph was sent to jail, you can say that Potiphar’s wife accused Joseph of doing something that he did not do, and that he was wrongly imprisoned. With that preface, let’s consider this amazing story.

perfectly bring it to fulfillment at the end! Equally wonderful is the fact that He has written the story for us, so we can read it and see His awesome plan unfold.

What patterns or repeated events do we notice in the story of Joseph?

On three different occasions, people in the story have dreams, which always come in sets of two, and which all come true: Joseph had two dreams about his family bowing down to him (Genesis 37:5-11), Pharaoh's two servants had dreams (Genesis 40), and Pharaoh had two dreams about the coming famine (Genesis 41:1-40).

There is a clear pattern of Joseph having favor, honor, and a degree of authority, then suffering evil when he was innocent, which God then used for good and gave Joseph favor, honor, and a degree of authority again. This pattern occurs three times.

1. Joseph was favored by his father Jacob and sent to oversee his brothers as they were tending their flocks. Joseph's brothers then sold him into slavery, but God blessed Joseph in Egypt in the house of Potiphar.
2. Potiphar put Joseph over all that he had, but Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of molesting her. Joseph was then thrown into prison, but God gave him favor with the jailor.
3. The jailor put Joseph in charge of the prisoners. Joseph accurately interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer, but the cupbearer forgot Joseph, who was left in prison for two more years. God then gave Pharaoh two dreams and gave Joseph the interpretation of the dreams. In response, Pharaoh placed Joseph over all of Egypt, and God thus used Joseph to save the Egyptians and the Israelites from the famine.

Importantly, Joseph repeatedly gave God the glory for interpreting the dreams and for providentially caring for him and his family. We'll see this echoed by Daniel in later dream interpretations. Both Joseph and Daniel refused to claim credit for their prophetic abilities.

As with Abraham and Jacob, Joseph's story has a pattern of events. Each time Joseph experienced injustice and hardship, God used them for good—both for Joseph and for others. Joseph summed up this theme in Genesis 50:20 when addressing his brothers: "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."

Joseph's story is different from those of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Joseph spent the majority of his life outside the Promised Land. Even more noticeable is that there

is no record of God speaking directly to Joseph. He revealed to Joseph the interpretations of dreams, but did not appear to Joseph or repeat His covenantal promises as He did to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Finally, Joseph is significantly different from his ancestors in that he seemed to trust God wholeheartedly, consistently acted with integrity, and put God first in everything.

Again, although Joseph might be called the main character of the story, since the story documents his life, God is the main actor in the story. It is God who delivered Joseph and placed him in exactly the right place at the right time to accomplish His will—the salvation of the Israelites from the famine. God is the actor and the Author of this story, working sovereignly.

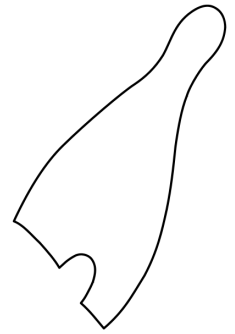
Between Joseph's faithful service to Pharaoh as governor of Egypt and the Pharaoh who would order the annihilation of a generation of Israelite baby boys were roughly 400 years. Let's step back to understand a bit more about the Pharaohs that Joseph and Moses encountered.

Egyptian Background History

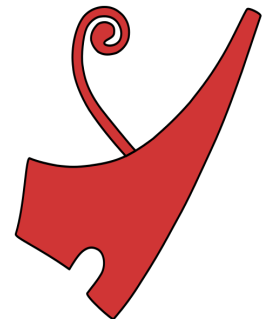
To understand the kings of Egypt, let's look at the Nile a little more closely: there's the Nile Delta, one distinctive region, and the Nile Valley that leads to it. These two areas were known as Lower Egypt and Upper Egypt: lower meaning “downstream,” so that “Upper Egypt” lies below “Lower Egypt” on any modern map.

The first Egyptian villages that archaeologists have located appear to be more than 5,000 years old. Some villages were in Upper Egypt and others were in the Delta region. Somewhere back in the mists of time, these villages united into two separate kingdoms. We don't know a lot about these early days, but we do know the king of Upper Egypt had a crown that was a white headpiece shaped like a cone. The king of Lower Egypt had a different crown: a red cylinder.

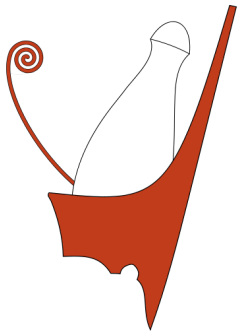
According to Egyptian tradition, Menes, King of Upper Egypt, conquered the area around the Nile Delta around 3100 BC. He united Upper and Lower Egypt and formed the first national government the world had ever seen. He built a new capital city, Memphis, near modern Cairo. When the two kingdoms were united the crown was united, too: the double crown of Egypt was a white cone inside a red cylinder. (See the diagrams on pages 43-44.)



Upper Crown
Hedjet



Lower Crown
Deshret



Lower Crown
Pschent

After that first king died, his heirs ruled over Egypt for a long time—but theirs was only the first of more than 30 royal dynasties in Egypt's history. That's because Egypt lasted a long time. These dynasties are the most convenient way to trace a time line as long as Egypt's.

Let's take a look at the basic time line. Egyptologists identify three Egyptian kingdoms that span 1500 years: the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom. To put things into a bit of perspective, the "New" Kingdom ended before David took the throne of Israel. Egypt finished off fifteen centuries of monarchy before Israel even got started!

There was a civilization of sorts in Egypt well before the Old Kingdom, and a turbulent "intermediate period" of a century or more between each of the three kingdoms. After the intermediate period that followed the New Kingdom, Egypt went through what is called its "Late Period." Things went downhill from there: Egypt wound up under foreign domination. Egypt was conquered or ruled by the Assyrians, Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans in turn. But previous to that, for thousands of years, Egypt was the mightiest power in the known world—so much so that, as we mentioned before, Egypt became the Old Testament symbol for worldly pride and human achievement.

Dynasties I and II came before the Old Kingdom. The Old Kingdom began at the transition from Dynasty II to Dynasty III, in 2686 BC. It lasted for the next 500 years. This is when the Egyptians built the famed great pyramids. Dynasties III and IV were a time of great royal power, but the power of the kings began to weaken in the next two dynasties and fell apart altogether for the next five.

In 1991 BC, a new Pharaoh took charge. Amenemhet seized the throne. His successors restored Egypt's wealth and power. They conquered the Nubians to the south and established trade with Canaan and Syria. But this Middle Kingdom ran out of steam in 1786 BC, and weak rulers led Egypt for the next 120 years.

Around 1670 BC, Egypt was overrun by immigrants with powerful new weapons. The Hyksos had chariots and better bows than the native Egyptians. Hyksos kings ruled Egypt for almost a century, but they were displaced when the New Kingdom began.

Did Joseph come to Egypt during the Hyksos period? Was the New Kingdom the "new Pharaoh that knew not Joseph" that we read about in Exodus 1 and Acts 7? We don't know! Old Testament scholars and archaeologists have spent generations trying

to nail down the details. What we do know is that history matters and Scripture tells us about real people: these Egyptian dynasties connect up with things we read about in our daily devotions.

It is against this backdrop that we see the story of God leading His people out by the hand of Moses. If we consider that God may well have led the Israelites out during a time when Egypt was at the height of its power, using plagues that directly demonstrated God's power over that of the Egyptian gods, it should give us a much richer understanding of God's work for His glory.

The New Kingdom lasted for 500 years, during which Egypt was the strongest power in the world. Egypt developed a permanent army with horse-drawn chariots that conquered territory as far north as modern Iraq and as far south as Ethiopia. But Egypt's power began to wane about the time Israel united twelve tribes into a nation.

Moses

Moses is a great character to keep in mind as you discuss Egypt. He's the perfect person to help you visualize day-to-day life in ancient Egypt, whether you're discussing slaves or royalty—because he was both! See if your kids can look at Egypt through Moses' eyes. What did he see when he looked out his window? Young children can fill in facts like what he ate or did for fun.

While we focus on the younger students in *Tapestry Primer*, this is a good moment to point out that in the full *Tapestry of Grace* program, your whole family would study together, with middle school kids making the connections between the Bible stories and what they're learning about Egyptian culture, while teens (and parents!) ponder what Hebrews 11:26 says about Moses: "He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward."

Conclusion

The more we learn, the more we see how it all goes together. The rains in Ethiopia fertilize the fields in Egypt where Israelite slaves groaned in bondage for centuries until God called Moses away from the palace to lead them to freedom.

We will follow threads like government and slavery and sacrifice and freedom throughout history—for a purpose. In the end, it all comes back to the glory of God. Jesus left the glories of Heaven to be born in a stable here on Earth. He paid a higher price than Moses did to deliver us from bondage worse than anything the Egyptians could inflict.