

# Sanctuary First

A PLACE TO BE

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## July: Sounds and Sights of Summer

We thought it would be challenging to reflect upon the influence *summer* has upon our family lives. I'm convinced that many of us have mood changes, usually for the better, when the sun begins to shine. Our spirits lift when we feel the sun. However when it comes to living and dealing with family issues - summer can be the most stressful time of all. Going on holiday as a family, or entertaining the children over the long break from school, is no easy task.

The thing is holidays are meant to be relaxing. The word 'holiday' in English comes from a time when certain days were set apart as 'holy'. This meant that workers got the day off to go to church and reflect upon the noble virtues of the holy person they were commemorating. In reality they often turned out to be times of great socialising and the relaxation came at the end of the day when everyone was exhausted. Today when we talk about holidays most people think of 'time out' and an opportunity to 'get away from it all', and perhaps rethink priorities.

There are 4 key stories in our lectionary readings this month that hinge around the importance of taking time out and going on a journey. For Abraham he goes on a journey with his son to figure out their relationship. We have Abraham's servant Eliezer going on a journey to find a wife for Isaac. Then there is the story of Jacob, who is forced to flee because of his deceitful activities towards his father and brother. Finally, we have a story that centres around Jacob's return journey and how he becomes reconciled to his brother Esau.

We have set a challenge to our 4 Daily Worship writers to write around these 4 stories. Each week the writers will use the sights and sounds of summer to help illustrate biblical truths that can be found in our readings are still relevant to our families. This will be an opportunity to share songs, places we go on holiday, clothes we wear in the summer, flowers we grow in our gardens, books we read on holiday, and of course - our childhood memories of summer.

\* Each week contains several biblical readings. The **Bold** reading is the focus for the week, the readings in normal type are the additional lectionary readings for the week and any readings in *Italics* are supplementary readings that could help unpack the sub-themes. \*

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
1, 2 July <i>Starting first weekend of July</i>	Misreading the Signs	<p><b>Genesis 22:1-14</b></p> <p>Psalm 13 Jeremiah 28:5-9 Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18 Romans 6:12-23 Matthew 10:40-42</p> <p><i>Numbers 22: 21-35 Acts 12 16-19</i></p>	<p>Genesis is all about personal and family relationships. Genesis 22.1-14 is an interesting passage to reflect on. You could say it's about a father and son relationship that has the potential to go wrong. At a superficial level it appears God is testing Abraham to see if his loyalty to his long awaited son Isaac outstrips his love and devotion to him. In some ways it's a difficult story because at first glance Abraham is contemplating child sacrifice.</p> <p>Traditionally this story has been seen by Christian commentators as a prefiguring of the death of Christ. God the father makes a way of atonement for sinful humanity. Jesus is the lamb of God, God's solution to redeem a rebellious world.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Long nights of summer</li> <li>2. Strains and stresses of family holidays</li> <li>3. Obeying rather than sacrificing</li> <li>4. Intergenerational conflict</li> <li>5. Broken and blended nature of family today</li> <li>6. A summer flower</li> <li>7. Childhood memories and innocence, trust in god</li> <li>8. A prayer of reconciliation between parents and children</li> </ol> <p><i>(Theme starts on Saturday the 1st, rather than Sunday so this first sub theme is 8 days)</i></p>
9 July	In Search of Romance	<p><b>Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67</b></p> <p>Psalm 45:10-17 Song of Solomon 2:8-13 Zechariah 9:9-12 Psalm 145:8-14 Romans 7:15-25a Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30</p> <p><i>Mark 5. 1-15 Song of Solomon 2. 8-13 Matthew 6.28</i></p>	<p>The second Genesis story you might say is about a romantic encounter. For many people Summer is the time for romance. So perhaps a romantic story in the right zone. This story may feel a bit off to those of who in the West but in many culture arranged marriages have worked for centuries.</p> <p>Abraham and Sarah are reaching the end of their lives and Abraham calls his faithful servant and instructs him to go back to the land of his ancestors in search of a wife for his son Isaac. The story unfolds in such a way to show that God works in our hearts and minds to lead us to the right people at the right time in order to fulfil his purposes. Eliezer succeeds in finding Isaac a bride but the family difficulties continue.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eliezer - Wedding Planner/Matchmaker</li> <li>2. Song about marriage</li> <li>3. Getting dressed up (wedding preparation)</li> <li>4. Joy of discovering romance</li> <li>5. Say it with flowers</li> <li>6. First valentine, first kiss...</li> <li>7. Living at peace with oneself</li> </ol>

Date	Subtheme	Readings	Notes
16 July	Sibling Rivalry	<p><b>Genesis 25:19-34</b></p> <p>Genesis 29-32</p> <p>Psalm 119:105-112</p> <p>Isaiah 55:10-13</p> <p>Psalm 65:(1-8), 9-13</p> <p>Romans 8:1-11</p> <p>Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23</p>	<p>The whole incident of being tied and bound by his father must have had a profound effect on Isaac. We don't know much about his relationship with Abraham, but one can only imagine it being tense.</p> <p>The story continues with Isaac's wife Rebekah unable to have children only to discover she is pregnant with twins. Highlighting once again that life is a gift from God.</p> <p>Now Isaac has to build a relationship with his own sons Jacob and Esau. This proves to be very difficult. It appears even in the womb his sons were at loggerheads. It is this struggle between brothers that shapes the family dynamic and causes great bitterness and grief, mistrust and deceit between Isaac and Rebekah.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Casual response to inheritance</li> <li>2. Playing favourites in the family</li> <li>3. Couples struggling to agree</li> <li>4. Child feeling overlooked/misunderstood</li> <li>5. Leaving home</li> <li>6. Developing maturity</li> <li>7. Wisdom from knocks and disappointment</li> </ol>
23 July	Restless Longing for Home	<p><b>Genesis 28:10-19a</b></p> <p>Genesis 29-32</p> <p>Genesis 37</p> <p>Genesis 42:29 - 43:15</p> <p>Genesis 45-46</p> <p>Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24</p> <p>Wisdom of Solomon 12:13, 16-19</p> <p>Isaiah 44:6-8</p> <p>Psalm 86:11-17</p> <p>Romans 8:12-25</p> <p>Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43</p>	<p>In the final week we think of those last days of summer, when the fierce heat is giving way to cooler breezes as the seasonal cycle moves on. We think about reconciliation and forgiveness and look ahead to the generations ahead of Jacob. As the years turn patterns repeat themselves and Jacob has to face many of his own demons.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complexity of human nature, sanctuary and deception</li> <li>2. Honesty and cunning</li> <li>3. Family homecoming</li> <li>4. Limping Jacob</li> <li>5. Jacob seeing sibling rivalry from parent's perspective</li> <li>6. Personal loss</li> <li>7. God's purpose brought about through families</li> </ol>