



PART 7
Jacob

GENESIS
GROWTH GUIDE



PART 7: JACOB • ISRAEL

Art by Brittany McCollum

Medium: Watercolor and pen

A note from our Communications Director: Thank you to the artists who have contributed their time and talents to create visuals to go along with our Genesis series. Your work is a beautiful reflection of our creator God. You can see the original art displayed in the hallway between the Foyer and the Education Wing.

GENESIS:

Trusting God's Grace in a Fallen World

As we continue reading through Genesis, we see God's grace and faithfulness to keep His promises to Jacob and his family. We see people like Jacob and Judah learning to fear God and to obey Him through many sins and failures. We begin with the Joseph story and see that God's promise to be with Jacob continues to Joseph through many afflictions. Truly God's providence and sovereignty is over all things as He is working for the good of His people and His glory.

Our prayer for all of us as we continue hearing sermons from Genesis, studying Genesis on our own, and discussing it in our Growth Groups, is that we would all be moved to love the Lord with all of our hearts day by day as we know Him better!

One way to use this guide is to work through it before the sermon on Sunday to prepare you for hearing God's Word. Then, find ways to discuss what you are learning and how you are applying it with others!

Nathan and the Growth Guide Team: Howard Amland, Shae Brown, Chris Connelly, Tom Dudenhofer, Lana Pustovit (production), Richard Maguire, Seth Weber (graphic design), Lynn Yount. Special contribution in the Genesis 34 lesson from Brian Sayers.

Schedule

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|---|------------------------|
| 1) Genesis 32-33 - Jacob Wrestles with God | November 23 & 30, 2025 |
| 2) Genesis 34 - Dinah & Shechem | December 7, 2025 |
| 3) Genesis 35-36 - God Blesses Jacob | December 28, 2025 |
| 4) Genesis 37 - Joseph's Dreams and Betrayal | January 4, 2026 |
| 5) Genesis 38 - Judah & Tamar | January 11, 2026 |
| 6) Genesis 39 - Joseph & Potiphar's Wife | January 18, 2026 |
| 7) Genesis 40 - Joseph Interprets Dreams | January 25, 2026 |
| 8) Genesis 41 - Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams | February 1, 2026 |

How to Read the Books of Moses

1. Observe the Biblical text

- Where does the scene begin and end? What happens before and after?
- Notice the elements of the story/scene: setting, characters, events, dialogue.
- How is God making himself known through this story, through the characters, events and dialogue?

2. Interpret the Biblical text

- What is the meaning of this text for the original audience?
- What does this text teach us about God, people, and their relationship with God?
- Connect to Christ: Is there a promise Jesus fulfills or a command He obeys? Do we see how much we need a Savior?
- What are the differences between the original audience and us now in the church (culture, context, covenant)?

3. Apply the Biblical text

- Is there a truth about God to believe and praise Him for?
- Is there a truth about people that I can personally confess?
- Is there a principle about the relationship people have with God that I can apply?
- Is there a behavior or attitude I can put on or put off?
- Is there something I should pray?
- If there is a law given in the Old Testament, what is the impact of the New Covenant in Christ on that law? Is the law retained, retooled, or retired?

Lesson 1: Jacob Wrestles with God

Genesis 32-33 - Sermons on November 23 (Gen 32) & November 30 (Gen 33)

Central Teaching and Application

Jacob prays to God and wrestles with the Lord as he fears the anger of Esau who is coming to meet him. Jacob finds favor with Esau when they meet.

*Trust the Lord through prayer as you face difficult situations.

Genesis 32:1-8

1. What does Jacob see in 32:1 that leads him to say “this is God’s camp!”?

2. What do Jacob’s messengers find out that concerns Jacob?

Jacob and the Blessing of the Lord

“Jacob’s sighting of angels was visual confirmation of a deeper reality—namely, that Jacob had been and would continue to be the object of God’s relentless grace—that an intrusive, tenacious, contending, renovating grace was at work on his life to make him to be the man that God intended him to be. This grace could not be shut out, would not let him go, and fought with him and for him at every turn.” Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word), p.398.

Genesis 32:9-12

3. What are the elements of Jacob’s prayer?

Discussion Question

4. What truths about God does Jacob highlight in his prayer?

Application

5. What principles of prayer do you see modeled by Jacob that you can imitate?

Genesis 32:13-21

6. What does Jacob do to prepare for meeting Esau, his brother?

Genesis 32:22-32

7. Who does Jacob wrestle with here?

8. What does Jacob seek from the Lord through this wrestling?

9. What does Jacob say in this scene and what do we learn from the dialogue he has with the one he wrestles with?

Discussion Questions

10. Jacob is renamed "Israel", which 32:28 explains by saying "for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." What do we learn about God from the scene where Jacob wrestles with Him? What do we learn about Jacob and Israel?

11. What connections to Jesus do you see in this chapter? For example, Jacob says, “I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered.” How does Jesus allow us to see the holy God and yet live (*Consider John 1:18, 2 Corinthians 4:4-6*)? Do you see any other ways this story points forward to Christ?

Genesis 33

12. What happens when Jacob meets Esau? How do you see God answering Jacob’s prayer from Genesis 32?

Seeing God’s Face

“And there is more. Jacob had not been ready to see Esau’s face until he had seen God’s face. The divine encounter prepared the way for the human encounter. Jacob’s rapprochement with God preceded and made possible his rapprochement with Esau. God’s crippling of Jacob (Jacob’s humbling) preceded his reconciliation with Esau. God’s blessing upon Jacob preceded Esau’s forgiveness of Jacob. The principle of God first, man second is written large in the language of love in the Scripture. It is in the very structure of the Ten Commandments. The first four command love for God; the second six command love for humanity. That is the order. Love God, and then you can love man.” Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (pp. 405-406).

Discussion Questions

13. Why does Esau invite Jacob to come visit him in Seir? What do you think God has done in Esau’s heart between Genesis 27:41-42 and Genesis 33?

14. Why do you think Jacob did not go to Seir to visit Esau, as he had told him he would do, but rather journeys on to Succoth?

Application

15. What truths about God and His care for His people do you see here that apply to the challenges you are facing?

16. Write a prayer to God expressing humility and faith and trust in Him in light of what you are facing now.

Prayer Requests and Sermon Notes

Lesson 2: Dinah & Shechem

Genesis 34 - Sermon on December 7

Central Teaching and Application

Shechem sins against Dinah; Dinah's brothers kill all of the men in Shechem's city.

*Repent of any abusive or selfish behavior. Consider the justice and vengeance of God and respond appropriately to evil.

Genesis 34:1-4

1. What horrible thing does Shechem do to Dinah, Jacob's daughter?

Genesis 34:5-24

2. What does Hamor, Shechem's dad, seek for his son?
3. How do Jacob and his sons respond to the request that Dinah be given to Shechem?
4. What motivates Shechem and his father Hamor and their whole city to comply with Jacob's sons' request?

Genesis 34:25-31

5. What do Simeon and Levi do when the city of Hamor and Shechem are all in pain on the third day after being circumcised?

6. What is Jacob's concern after his sons take vengeance on the men of the city?

Discussion Questions

7. Do you think Simeon and Levi were wrong? Did they receive any instructions from God to either respond in this way or to refrain? Does God in any way correct or confirm what they did?

Jacob's Sin

"Jacob was pathetic—for what he did not say. He did not condemn the massacre. Neither did he condemn his sons for breaking the law of *lex talionis* (*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*). He did not mention that they violated his contract with Shechem. Jacob said nothing about their desecration of Israel's most precious symbol of faith. And, of course, there was not a word of concern about his just-raped daughter Dinah. Jacob's only concern was survival—to save his own skin and, by association, that of his family." Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (p. 416).

8. In the New Covenant, in the church age, what instruction has God given us regarding justice and vengeance? Consider Romans 12:14-13:7.
9. In cases of abuse like what happened to Dinah or other cases of abuse, what specifically should we do? What responsibility does the government have according to Romans 13:1-7? What responsibility does the church have according to Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5:9-13?

WISDOM FOR THE ABUSED

If you have been abused physically or sexually, God does not want you to be silent—even if your abuser has convinced you otherwise. God's heart for the abused is to rescue them and bring justice to abusers (read Psalm 10). His call for victims to "cry out" in Deuteronomy 22 is a call for victims to seek to bring justice to abusers when possible. One of the ways God has designed to punish those who do evil is through the governing authorities, as God uses them to carry out his wrath on wrongdoers (Romans 13:1-7). The church desires to cooperate with God's design to protect the vulnerable and to punish those who do evil (Matthew 18), while acknowledging that only Christ's return will bring complete and perfect justice. Please ask a church leader for help. We will listen, and we will help you find safety for you and your family, and justice for abusers.

WISDOM FOR HELPING OTHERS WHO ARE ABUSED

If you know of a minor, an elderly person, or an otherwise vulnerable person that is being abused physically or sexually, there is a legal requirement to report that to the authorities to investigate. If you have questions, seek wisdom from a pastor or elder about how to best do that.

If you know others who are being abused physically or sexually, you should encourage them to seek safety and help from others (legal authorities and church authorities). You should not report the abuse directly without their consent (even if crimes are being committed), as this could create more danger for them. You might be able help victims develop a safety plan to eliminate that danger if they agree to report it to authorities. (Both of these teaching sections were written by Brian Sayers)

10. How does Christ address this kind of sin in His first coming (*Consider 2 Corinthians 5:21*) and how will He deal with it in His second coming (*Consider Revelation 21:7*)? What do we learn about how Jesus is greater than Jacob and is able to help people affected by abuse and sexual sin according to the account of the Samaritan woman in John 4?

Application

11. What truths about God do you need to meditate on and praise Him for related to ways you have been sinned against in the past?
12. What manifestations of selfishness and hurtful behavior do you see in your own life that you need to repent of and put off?

13. How can you grow in being loving as Christ has loved us?

Prayer Requests and Sermon Notes

Lesson 3: God Blesses Jacob

Genesis 35-36 - Sermon on December 28

Central Teaching and Application

God blesses Jacob and names him Israel, confirming again that He will keep all the promises He has made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). Jacob and his family put away their idols and call on the Lord. The Lord protects them from the surrounding nations and prospers them.

*Worship the God who always keeps His promises as you put away vain idols that cannot do anything for you.

Genesis 35:1-15

1. What is the context of Genesis 35? What just happened in chapter 34?
2. What does God tell Jacob to do?
3. What does Jacob have his household do as they prepare to go and call on the Lord at Bethel?

Putting off the Old

"The purification was effected by ritually washing their bodies, much as was done later by Israel at Sinai (cf. Exodus 19:10-15). Jacob's command to change clothes (unique in the Old Testament) dramatically symbolized the transition from one state to another. Indeed, the symbolism may have been universally understood in the ancient world, because that is what Pharaoh had Joseph do when he entered his service (cf. 41:14). And here Jacob's command to Israel to change clothes likely is where Paul derived the metaphor for the changed life, exhorting believers 'to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life . . . and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness' (Ephesians 4:22-24). From Shechem, Jacob and his people would pilgrimage to Bethel as a new people." Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (pp. 420-421).

4. What does God do to protect them from the people who might have been hostile towards them?

5. What does God promise Jacob again?

Genesis 35:16-29

6. What happens to Rachel?

7. What do you notice about the final scene where Isaac dies and his sons bury him?

Genesis 36

8. What do we learn about how God had blessed Esau and Jacob from 36:6-8?

9. What stands out to you about the generations of Esau?

Discussion Questions

10. What do you think is the connection between these three accounts: the attack by Simeon and Levi, Jacob and his household putting away their foreign gods, and Jacob calling on the Lord?

11. In chapter 34 there is no mention of God and it is full of the sin of various people. Chapter 35 mentions God over ten times. What do we learn about God and His character from this chapter, especially in light of what just happened in chapter 34?
12. What is the effect of God repeating these promises to Jacob here again? How would this have encouraged the Israelites in the wilderness with Moses?
13. How does Jesus connect to the events of this chapter (putting away idols, calling on the Lord, seeing the Lord protect you, etc.)? *Consider for example, Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 10:19-39, and Hebrews 13:5-6.*

Cultivating Faithful Worship

"But following his escape from Laban, Jacob willfully spent a decade doing much as he pleased, first dwelling for a time outside the promised land and then, when he did cross over into Canaan, settling in prosperous Shechem instead of traveling the twenty miles further to Bethel. This 'I'll do it my way,' halfway obedience brought tragedy. The catastrophic results (the desolation of Dinah, the desecration of Israel's most holy sign—circumcision, the massacre of the Shechemites, the degradation of his own children) rendered Jacob a stench in the land—and, most significantly, utterly ready to hear God's voice. Then 'God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau"' (v. 1). It was a call to a religious pilgrimage, as the special use of 'go up' suggests the pilgrimage was to culminate in the building of an altar at Bethel, which was a long-standing site of Canaanite worship, and by doing so to declare the name of the true God. The intent was to drive a stake into the heartland of Canaanite worship." Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (p. 420).

Application

14. What challenging situations have you seen in your life that have pushed you to call on the Lord?

15. What idols do you need to put away as you seek to be pure in your love for the Lord?

16. What truths about God are illustrated in this chapter? Spend time praising the Lord for those truths.

Prayer Requests and Sermon Notes

Lesson 4: Joseph's Dreams & Betrayal

Genesis 37 - Sermon on January 4

Central Teaching and Application

Jacob favors Joseph and God gives him two dreams about him ruling over his family. All of this leads to his brothers hating him with a great jealousy. They sell him into slavery and lie to Jacob about what happened to him.

*Trust God when bad things happen; He is working all things for our good and His glory.

Genesis 37:1-11

1. What happens at the beginning of the chapter to begin to spoil Joseph's relationship with his brothers?
2. What does Israel do for Joseph to further set the brothers against him? Why?
3. What are the two dreams that Joseph has and how do his brothers respond when he shares them?

Genesis 37:12-36

4. What do Joseph's brothers do to him? How does Reuben intervene?
5. What ends up happening to Joseph in Egypt?

6. What do the brothers tell Jacob and how does he respond?

Discussion Questions

7. This is the beginning of a story that does not end until Genesis 50. In the big picture of this story of Joseph, what are we learning about God in this part of the story?
8. We understand that God is sovereignly ordaining these events for His good purposes (Isaiah 46:10, Genesis 50:20, Psalm 139:16). However, on a human level, what is your analysis of the actions of each of these people? Write down what you think their sin or failure might have been, or what good thing(s) they did.

Israel (Jacob)

Joseph

Reuben

Judah

The other brothers

9. How would this part of the Joseph story have impacted the Israelites in the wilderness with Moses?

10. What similarities do you see between Joseph and what happened to him in Genesis 37 and Jesus and what happened to Him when He came to His own people (see John 1:11)?

God's Providence

“ ‘God's work of providence is his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions,’ says the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 11. Our great Creator uses his creative power to keep all creation in existence, to involve himself in all events, and to direct all things to their appointed end. That is why Joseph would one day say, “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” (50:20).

Do you see what that tells us? It reveals that any of us who follow God will live a life that will sometimes become very tangled. At times complications will rise from our own sin (as with Joseph), from the sin of those around us, and from the sin of those in the wider spheres of our existence. We live in a world caught in a web of sin, and it is constantly casting new webs. But we know that amidst life's complexities the creative power of God is at work to do us good. This is true when we are ill, when we have trouble with our children or grandchildren, when professional problems engulf us.

Truly we have a God of providence, a God who sustains our souls in all of life, perpetually working good. This is a truth to learn now, because life is not going to get easier. In fact, the more you follow God, the more complicated life will become because your life's course will buck the currents of this world. But take it to heart that God is at work to do you good, and rest your soul in that. Submit yourself to him in the great processes of life. Follow him. Listen to the life of Joseph, a hero for the ages, who became so much like Christ himself.” Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (pp. 440-442).

Application

11. What truths about God are illustrated in this part of the Joseph story that you need to think about and trust?

12. What sinful actions are displayed here that you can relate to? How will you put them away from your life?
13. How can you cultivate a heart that remains humble and gives all the glory to God in every situation, especially when tempted to seek personal recognition from others? How can you stay hopeful when you are sinned against and treated unjustly? What gospel truths do you need to think about to have a right view of yourself?

Learning from Joseph

“Joseph’s life teaches us that life is full of inequities and unfairness and tragedies. But it also teaches us that we have a great God who works amidst the rich compost of human life to do his will. We must understand that as God’s children, we are called to give everything to him, even the bitter things of the past. As believers, we have been set free from the bondage of sin and death (Romans 8:2). We must rest everything on the awesome God of the Bible. We must believe that the awesome God of Genesis is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him—that he is good and equitable to all his children (cf. Hebrews 11:6). We must appropriate the freedom of Christ. “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Here is reality. Real life is unfair. Real life deals out many inequities. Real life is filled with sin and sinners. Real wounds are everywhere. But the transcending eternal reality is that God is all-powerful and that his massive providence is at work on his children’s behalf. Life brims with hope and optimism. As God’s children, we must believe his word—that God will work good out of past evils—and that trusting him we will one day say with Joseph to past evils, ‘As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good’ (Genesis 50:20).” Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (pp. 449-450).

Prayer Requests and Sermon Notes

Lesson 5: Judah & Tamar

Genesis 38 - Sermon on January 11

Central Teaching and Application

In the midst of the wickedness of Judah and his sons, God graciously continues Judah's line through unlikely means.

*Repent of selfishness and wickedness and look to Christ for salvation.

Genesis 38:1-4

1. These events in the life of Judah happened "at that time," referring back to what just occurred in Genesis 37. What was Judah involved in with his brother Joseph "at that time"?
2. What does Judah do in these first four verses? What stands out to you?

Genesis 38:5-11

3. What do Judah's first two sons do? What does this show us about the wickedness of humanity?

Genesis 38:12-30

4. What does Tamar do? What reasons are given for her actions?
5. What does Judah do? What does this show us about his character?
6. When it is found out that Tamar is pregnant, what does Judah say should happen?

7. What is Judah's response when he finds out that Tamar is pregnant by his actions?

Judah

We see from Genesis 49:3-12 and from Luke 3:23 and 33 that Judah is the brother chosen by God to be the ancestor of the Messiah. His character development is emphasized particularly in Genesis 37-50. He is the one in Genesis 37:26 who initiates selling Joseph into slavery. Here in this chapter we see his sin with Tamar and his sons' sin. All of this is very significant as we consider God's grace in choosing to bring the Savior through the line of unworthy, sinful people and God's grace that does not leave His people in their wickedness but changes and transforms them through faith and repentance (as we will see later in the Joseph narrative with Judah).

Discussion Questions

8. What message should the people of Israel take away from stories like this one and all of the other stories that show the sinfulness of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Consider Deuteronomy 7:6-11. How would this story and others like it promote both humility and confidence in God's love?
9. What does God's judgment of Er and Onan show us about God's character (1 Peter 1:15-16, 1 John 4:7-8)?

A Surprising Heroine

"Blessed be Tamar! Through her determination to have children of the promise, she scratched and clawed her way into Israel and secured for Judah the honor of fathering both David and the Savior of the world.

Here is a great surprise. Tamar the Canaanite, who began outside the people of God, turned out to be a heroine of God's people. Tamar aligned herself with the purposes of God, and through her God's promise to Abraham (blessing to all the peoples of the earth) was fulfilled. The Judah-Tamar story teaches us that God's purpose is bound up with the growth and development of his people, so that God is always at work in his children's lives, shaping them to serve his design, as he so marvelously did with Judah and Tamar." Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (p. 455).

"What a God is ours. He is so great that his hidden hand constantly surprises us as he works in history and in the hearts of his people for their benefit—always for their good." Hughes, p.458.

10. What does God choosing to use Tamar to bear the heir of Judah, the one who would carry the line of David and of Jesus Christ, show us about His character and His ways?

Application

11. What truths about God do you see here both in how He judges selfishness and wickedness and in how He preserves the line that would bring us our Savior? Spend time praising Him.
12. What steps can you take to repent of selfishness and to put on the opposite of selfishness, which is love?

Prayer Requests and Sermon Notes

Lesson 6: Joseph & Potiphar's Wife

Genesis 39 - Sermon on January 18

Central Teaching and Application

God is with Joseph in Egypt and blesses him in Potiphar's house and in prison so that he is entrusted with great responsibility, even as he is tempted and falsely accused of wrongdoing.

*Trust God to be with you and to help you to work hard and to resist temptations to sin.

Genesis 39

1. In what ways do you see God showing that He is with Joseph and blessing him?
2. What affliction and temptation does Joseph face in Potiphar's household?
3. How does Joseph respond to the temptation Potiphar's wife presents? What do you see about Joseph's character and convictions?
4. What happens to Joseph when he goes to prison?

Discussion Questions

5. How is the blessing and favor of the Lord that Joseph experienced similar to what God did for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? (*Consider, for example, God's promises to Isaac in Genesis 26:3 and 26:24 and to Jacob in Genesis 28:15.*)

6. How would this situation—temptation and trial for Joseph and the way the Lord was with him—have encouraged and helped the Israelites in the wilderness with Moses?
7. What do you see about God in this chapter?
8. What can we learn from Joseph about working as unto the Lord for your employer? *Consider for example Colossians 3:22-25.*

Application

9. Consider Matthew 28:18-20, John 14:15-23, and Ephesians 1:13-14. Why should we be confident that the Lord will be with us as He was with Joseph? Write a prayer praising God for His presence and favor with you if you are in Christ.

God is with us

"Our Messiah, Jesus, is Yahweh and bears the name Immanuel, "God with us." As believers, then, God is always with us, in all of life. In fact, when Jesus left this earth he said, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20b). Brothers and sisters, the key to our day-to-day success in this life is living in the reality that God is with us. The reality that we are called to embrace would have astonished Joseph. That God became one of us and now, ascended, remains "God with us" is the most sublime truth. May we own it with all our souls!" Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (p. 466).

10. What temptations are you facing? How can you do as Joseph did and flee the temptation? What truths do you need to remember from the gospel (consider Romans 13:14 and Romans 6:3-11)?

11. Consider Colossians 3:23-4:1. What principles do we see here that you can apply to your work or school situation?

Prayer Requests and Sermon Notes

Lesson 7: Joseph Interprets Dreams

Genesis 40 - Sermon on January 25

Central Teaching and Application

God gives Joseph the interpretation of the dreams of the chief cupbearer and chief baker of the Pharaoh.

*Believe that God's Word will always come to pass as you wait on Him and life does not always make sense.

Genesis 40

1. According to Genesis 39:19-23, what had happened to get Joseph into the prison and what was God doing for Joseph while he was there?
2. What happened to the chief cupbearer and chief baker to get them into the prison according to 40:1-4? What was Joseph's role related to them?
3. What was the dream of the cupbearer and what was Joseph's interpretation of it, as God provided it to him?
4. What request did Joseph make of the cupbearer when he knew he was to be restored to his former position as cupbearer?

5. What was the dream of the baker and what was Joseph's interpretation of it, as God provided it to him?
6. What happened in Genesis 40:20-23 after Joseph interpreted the two dreams?

Discussion Questions

7. What did Joseph believe about God that motivated him to seek to interpret the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker (Genesis 40:8)?
8. In the bigger picture of the events of Joseph's life, what seems to be happening through the events of this chapter, and how does the cupbearer forgetting about Joseph create further suspense?
9. What truths about God and His sovereignty are illustrated in this chapter and how would those truths have impacted Israel as they waited in the wilderness with Moses?

Delay

"The experience of delay is written large in the lives of God's greats. Abraham's long wait for a son—Moses' forty years of preparation in the desert—David's anointing as a boy, and then the long years of delay in the fields of Judea, and then the flight from Saul and hiding in the cave in Adullam. Hudson Taylor, the founder of China Inland Mission, knew the disappointment of delay. After six years of intensive service in China, he returned home as an invalid and settled with his little family in the poor east end of London. There his outside interests faded, friends began to forget, and five

(continued on next page)

long years were spent in coal-blackened streets in London. But from those years he writes: "Yet without those hidden years, with all their growth and testing, how could the vision and enthusiasm of youth have been matured for the leadership that was to be?" And as modern missionary history attests, when the delay ended, the great China Inland Mission emerged.

Joseph experienced disappointment after disappointment—his brothers' murderous rejection, evil for doing good in resisting Potiphar's wife, the withering disappointment from the forgetful cupbearer. Joseph's life teaches us that disappointments are essential to spiritual growth because they demand faith and resting all hope upon God. As V. Raymond Edman wrote, 'Delay never thwarts God's purposes; it only polishes his instrument.'" Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (p. 473).

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Application

10. What has God said about the future and how does it relate to you? What implications are there for your life? Consider, for example, 2 Peter 3:1-18.

11. God's ultimate and sufficient revelation is Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-3) and the Bible that we now have. What role or place could a dream or vision have now? How should any dream or impression or "word" someone thinks they have received be evaluated?

12. How can you cause the all-sufficient Word of Christ to dwell in you richly (Colossians 3:16) and shape your life?

Prayer Requests and Sermon Notes

Lesson 8: Joseph Interprets Pharaoh's Dreams

Genesis 41 - Sermon on February 1

Central Teaching and Application

God lifts up Joseph as he interprets Pharaoh's dream and uses him to save the whole world from the famine.

*Trust God to accomplish salvation through those He speaks to and raises up to bring deliverance. Walk in the good works that God has prepared beforehand for you.

Genesis 41

1. What was Pharaoh's dream and why does he call for Joseph to come interpret the dream?
2. What is Joseph's response to Pharaoh asking him to interpret the dream, and what does this show about Joseph's faith?

God's Providence

"These final events of Joseph's imprisonment were arranged by God to make Joseph an extraordinary instrument for the preservation of his people. Amidst the disappointment and delay of being forgotten by the cupbearer, Joseph's trust in God had been further tempered and deepened. Joseph had become a radically God-centered man who believed that his God-given dreams would come true in God's good time. God would remain at the center of his vision through everything that was to come. At last Joseph was ready for the great work of his life." Hughes, R. Kent. *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Preaching the Word) (p. 475).

3. What interpretation of the dream did Joseph share with Pharaoh?

4. What did Pharaoh do in response to Joseph's interpretation?
5. What did Pharaoh lead Egypt to do over the seven years of plenty, and what was the result when the famine started?

Discussion Questions

6. How does Joseph give glory to God and point to God's role in all of this?
7. What do you learn about God's sovereignty and rule over nature and nations?
8. What series of events in the life of Joseph did God use to make him the second most powerful person in the world and to save the world from a famine?
9. Describe the radical change in circumstances in Joseph's life from Genesis 37 when he was 17 to Genesis 41 when he was 30 years old.

10. What do we learn about God and His care for Joseph through the names that he gives his two sons?
11. How would this chapter have encouraged and impacted the Israelites in the wilderness with Moses?

Have a Big View of God

"Through these wrenching extremes Joseph maintained at least three distinctives. At the base he had a transcending belief in the greatness of God. Joseph's understanding of God was that he controlled all of life, including the day-in, day-out events of life. He believed that God was at work in the rich compost of sinful life. In his day, Joseph maintained the greatest concept and understanding of God of any living soul. And he heroically declared that to Pharaoh (the pseudo-god man)—telling the king that God, not Pharaoh, controlled the destiny of the Nile.

Along with this Joseph believed God's word that had been revealed to him through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He believed in God's covenant promises. He also believed in his God-given dreams. And he believed all this without exception as he stood alone in Egypt contra mundum. That is how Moses would stand before Pharaoh, that is how Daniel would stand before the King of Babylon, and that is how the Apostle Paul towered before the courts of Rome. That is how Martin Luther stood before the world. They all believed God's word. Joseph believed God's word as did no other soul in his day.

Furthermore, Joseph believed that Yahweh was with him both in the pit and at the pinnacle. That is why—in the face of every political, social, and spiritual force in Egypt—he gave his boys Hebrew names. Joseph's belief in God's greatness, more than any other man—Joseph's belief in God's word, as no other man—Joseph's belief that God was with him, more than any of his contemporaries, is a template for every soul in every age.

Christians, this is the age of affluence. And it is possible for a middle-class person to live with greater ease and independence than did Pharaoh in Egypt—insulated from the economy, insulated from the vicissitudes of nature, insulated from illness—so that he or she never looks up to God for anything. So be warned and made wise by the God-given example of Joseph" Hughes, R. Kent.

Genesis: Beginning and Blessing (Preaching the Word) (pp. 490-492).

Application

12. God spoke to Joseph and raised him up to bring about the deliverance of the world from this famine. God spoke to Moses and raised him up to bring about the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. God has spoken to and through Jesus Christ and has raised Him up to save the world. Consider Hebrews 1:1-4 and John 3:14-18 and share how God has delivered you through Jesus Christ.
13. What truths about God do you see in this chapter? Spend time praising God.
14. Is there a specific sin and or trial you are facing right now that you need to depend on Jesus to deliver you from? What steps do you need to take to trust in Him and experience His deliverance?
15. Consider Ephesians 2:8-10. God has saved you for good works that He has prepared beforehand in His sovereignty and love. What are some of those good works that you are walking in right now or seeking to do as you see God putting them in your path?

Prayer Requests and Sermon Notes

GROUPS

 **FAITH BIBLE CHURCH**

 440 W. Cora, Spokane, WA 99205

 509.326.9455

 fbchurch.org