

# **SOVEREIGN IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES**

**THE STORY OF JOSEPH THROUGH THE BOOK OF GENESIS**

**LEADERS NOTES**

# CONTENTS

<b>3</b>	WEEK 1 - GENESIS 1-36
<b>9</b>	WEEK 2 - GENESIS 37
<b>12</b>	WEEK 3 - GENESIS 39
<b>16</b>	WEEK 4 - GENESIS 40
<b>19</b>	WEEK 5 - GENESIS 41
<b>22</b>	WEEK 6 - GENESIS 42-45
<b>24</b>	WEEK 7 - GENESIS 46-47
<b>27</b>	WEEK 8 - GENESIS 48-49
<b>29</b>	WEEK 9 - GENESIS 50

This introductory study to our Joseph series does not mention Joseph! This is the background we need to understand Joseph's story. **The big message for these opening chapters of Genesis (1-36) is that God is creator and sustainer.** He is the one who made things "very good" and everything he does is to restore humanity to that point by the redemptive work of Jesus.

The idea of Covenant is important to understand. The ancient covenants are steeped in culture and are worth investigating more if you are inclined to.

Not all web sources are necessarily accurate, but there are many helpful articles that can point us in the right direction. For example:

>>[LINK HERE](#) >>

Or type <https://thebiblesays.com/tough-topics/suzerain-vassal-treaties/#:~:text=God's%20covenant%2Ftreaty%20with%20Israel,obedience%2C%20and%20curses%20for%20rebellion>

The Bible is one story of God's love for humanity and his desire to rescue them. **What Genesis 1-36 shows is a pattern of humanity's failure to be able to uphold faithfulness in their relationship. Despite God's promises and provisions, humans continually fail God and need his help to be restored.** If God gave us what we deserved, we would have nothing at all, except condemnation. Thankfully, God's covenant promises are delivered by Him faithfully, with God himself paying the cost for our failures. Of course, this is seen perfectly in Jesus' death on the cross for our sin, and his resurrection victory for our final redemption.

# STUDY ONE

# GENESIS 1-36

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

**1. What is the most important promise you have ever made to someone? What are/were the consequences of keeping or breaking that promise?**

*Pastorally, this may open up some areas for prayer later on. (e.g. broken marriage vows). It is a helpful way to introduce the relationship side of our relationship with God and how sin damages this relationship so personally between us and God. This study opens up the idea of “Covenant” in the Bible.*

**2. What stood out to you from the passage and sermon at church on Sunday? Were you challenged, encouraged, rebuked or did it raise any questions?**

*These questions are helpful for a few reasons; they help us get on topic, they allow everyone to speak, they help us value church and they help us see if someone is consistently missing church, granting the opportunity to check up on them.*

## ENGAGE

**3. Genesis 1-36 gives us the necessary background to the story of Joseph. If you were to summarise the story of the whole Bible in one sentence, what would it be? What is “the story of God”?**

*See if you can pick up on the areas of creation (Gen 1-2), sin (Gen 3), redemption (Gen 4 and onwards – most of the Bible!) and restoration (the cross and Revelation 21), for example.*

## **Read Genesis 1:27-31**

**4. This passage is sometimes referred to as the “covenant of creation”. A simple way to think of a covenant is an ‘agreement with relationship’. In what ways do you see God’s creation as a covenant with humanity?**

*Thinking of covenant as an ‘agreement with relationship’, we will see that God’s covenants with humanity are always broken by humans, never by God. The Creation covenant is a promise of blessing and purpose. Humans are made in God’s image, then blessed and given the purpose to multiply. They are given all the resources they need. God offers and provides everything. Humanity merely needs to accept it. Try to draw out how God has the onus on himself for this. He does the “heavy lifting”.*

Following continued sinfulness on the earth, the great flood comes, then God makes a covenant with Noah (the rainbow sign) in Genesis 9. Following this, sin continues and the Tower of Babel is built as people seek to reach beyond God with human endeavour and achievement (Genesis 11). Following this moment, as the nations are scattered, we move into the next part of God’s plan, which will finally be fulfilled in Jesus:

## **Read Genesis 12:1-9**

**5. Genesis 12:1-3 is seen by many as a pivotal moment in Biblical history. Why do you think that is?**

*The call of Abraham established God’s purposes through a people. He chooses a person, makes a people, and then fulfils his plan for salvation through his people. God makes these promises which he, of course, keeps:*

- *Land (verse 1)*
- *Great nation (verse 2a)*
- *Great name (verse 2b)*
- *Bringing blessing to them as a nation (verse 3a)*
- *Bringing blessing to the whole world through them (verse 3b)*

**6. It might look like God’s plans keep failing. Again and again, his hopes for humanity are ruined by sinful disobedience. How does the call of Abraham tie into the covenant of Creation in Genesis 1?**

*The Creation covenant was a promise from our creator to remain in a relationship with humanity, who are made in his image. God simply does not give up on his “very good” creation. God does not “uncreate”. He continues to love and care for his creation and in his covenant love, he seeks to restore our relationship with him, the Creator. God’s covenants are never broken. His character never changes. He remains the creator and sustainer, despite the work of the evil one to undermine and “uncreate” what is very good.*

**Read Genesis 15:1-20**

This significant chapter is steeped in culture. It is in this chapter God makes a covenant with Abram that will be fulfilled only upon the arrival of the Messiah, Jesus.

Let’s look at this in sections:

**Verses 1-6**

God promises to make Abram into a great nation (refer back to Genesis 12:2)

**7. What does God reveal to Abram as to how he will establish him as a great nation?**

**What are the difficulties with this plan from Abram’s perspective?  
How is this difficulty helpful for us in understanding how God does things?**

*Culturally, to not have a male offspring would have meant the end of your family line. At Abram’s age, it seems impossible. Chapter 16 reveals that Abram and Sarai do not really trust God with his plans. The helpful thing here is that God does the impossible. He makes it clear that it is Him who will do this, as there is (next to) no chance that his plans could be fulfilled by human means. His plans required divine intervention – a 99 year old man and a 90 year old barren woman will give birth to the great nation that God promised. This was not a coincidence or a work of human hands. Only God could possibly pull this off!*

## **8. What is the significance for us of Abram's response in verse 6?**

### **Verse 7-16 (we'll come back to verses 9-11)**

God promises to give Abram a land for his people (refer back to Genesis 12:1). Abram does not understand how God will make this happen. God then reveals to him his future in a dream (slavery in Egypt).

### **9. How does this answer Abram's question in verse 8?**

*God is revealing that his plans will not come to fruition in Abram's lifetime. In fact, it will be 400 years away! But this foreknowledge God offers Abram is enough to let him know that God knows how his plans will unfold in the midst of human sin and suffering. Again, this plan shows that Israel having their own land is a "God-incidence", not a coincidence. It is by God's hand alone that his plans will come to fruition.*

### **10. Can you think of a time when God's plans did not make sense to you? How did you deal with that?**

*It is helpful for people to share their struggles. Sometimes it is not understanding. Sometimes it is misunderstanding. Sometimes we tell God our own plans and complain when they don't happen. This question might really help some pastoral conversations to emerge for prayer.*

### **Verse 9-11, 17-21**

God "cuts" a covenant with Abram.

This scene is the actual cutting of a covenant with Abram. The language of cutting a covenant comes from the actual way it was done under the Suzerain Vassal Treaty of the Ancient Near East. Animals were cut in half and placed in two lines – one half opposite the other. The two parties of the covenant would walk between the pieces (like an aisle at a wedding – also a covenant!) The message was this: if one of us breaks this covenant, may this happen – that you or I would be cut in half for breaking the covenant. This was a typical covenant/treaty of the times. However, something is different here.

## **11. Who walks down the aisle? And why? What does this imply about God’s covenant with Abram?**

*The smoking firepot/torch represents God’s presence (just like the burning bush and God’s presence with the ark of the covenant at night during the wandering in the wilderness). So only God “walks” down the aisle. What does this mean? That if either side breaks the covenant, God will be the one who takes the punishment. He walks down the aisle of consequence for both sides. Like a faithful marriage partner, God is completely faithful to his word, but goes one step further – he offers to take the punishment even when his people break faith... which we do again and again.*

*The list of the nations at the end are a tidy conclusion to this Suzerain-Vassal Ancient Near East treaty/covenant.*

*The wedding similarities with the aisle are more than coincidental. Traditionally, people would come to a wedding and be asked “Bride’s side or groom’s side?” That is, which side of the covenant people are you standing with?*

## **APPLY**

Jesus is the fulfillment of ALL of God’s covenant promises. God’s faithfulness is seen in sending Jesus as the Messiah to bring redemption and salvation to humanity.

## **12. In light of our covenant unfaithfulness to God, because of our daily sin, how is the Holy Spirit directing your life now to be faithful like Jesus in your life:**

- In prayer?
- At work/school/home?
- In relationships?
- In serving/mission?

## **13. Like God’s people in Genesis 12, how have you been “blessed to be a blessing” to others?**

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER**



# STUDY TWO

# GENESIS 37

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What one thing would make your life better or easier?
2. What struck you from last week's sermon?

## ENGAGE

**Read Genesis 37:1-11**

**3. List all the things that we are told about:**

**Joseph**

**Joseph's brothers**

**Jacob, Joseph's father**

*Joseph: young man of 17, Jacob's favourite, given special coat to signify he was favourite, a bit arrogant in telling dreams that exalted himself (even over his father, which was never done in that culture)*

*Joseph's brothers: hated Joseph (3 times mentioned), were jealous of him*

*Jacob: had a favourite among his 12 sons (not helpful for family dynamics!), made a special coat (how long did that take?!) and gave it to Joseph, was initially outraged by Joseph's 2nd dream, but then 'kept it in mind' (meaning, he pondered whether there was something more to it)*

**4. What made Joseph's brothers so angry with him?**

*Their desire to have the same level of affection/attention from their father meant they were envious of Joseph. Joseph exacerbated this by 'bringing a bad report' about some of them to his father, and then telling them about his dreams which portrayed himself as having power over them. Envy was the root that flowered into murderous intent.*

**Read Genesis 37:12-36**

**5. How does Jacob display his favouritism towards Joseph at the beginning of this passage? (12-14)**

*He chooses to send Joseph to 'bring word about his brothers', even though that had been the cause of drama in the previous scene (q4)*

**6. What tips the brothers over from 'hatred' and 'jealousy' into murderous intent? (18-20)**

*Seeing him come towards them on his own, they mention the 'dreams' twice in their statement of intent to kill him. They can't stand the idea that this younger brother, whom the Father already loves more, would have power over them.*

**7. How does the robe become an important symbol in the narrative?**

*The robe was the symbol of the Father's favouritism. It is stripped from Joseph by his brothers, to show that they are trying to remove him out of the Father's favour. It is then used as the chief prop to deceive the Father. The narrative started with the coat in the Father's hands, and ends with it in his hands again, covered in fake blood.*

**8. Why do you think God is not mentioned specifically in any of this narrative?**

*Ask for the thoughts of your group.*

**9. Read the theological analysis given by Joseph in Genesis 50:20 How does this verse change the way you view this narrative of chapter 37?**

*It shows that God was working through all of the details of Joseph's life to bring about his plans for the good of his people, even those things that happened that were meant for Joseph's ill, and which we would call evil actions.*

**Read Peter's speech in Acts 2:22-24**

**10. How does this verse echo Joseph's analysis in Gen 50:20 (looked at above)?**

*It shows that even in the most heinous act of history, the putting to death of the Messiah, God could be working to bring about the salvation of his people. The act was evil, but it brought good. And how those two things exist together is a mystery, but the fact that they can is guaranteed by the word of God who knows how they can.*

## **APPLY**

**11. Are there elements of your life where you have found it difficult to see what God might be doing, or even doubted God's goodness?**

**12. How does this passage speak to those situations?**

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER**

# STUDY THREE

# GENESIS 39

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What stood out to you from the passage and sermon at church on Sunday? Were you challenged, encouraged, rebuked or did it raise any questions?

## ENGAGE

**Take a moment for a quick recap of Joseph's story so far.**

*Descendant of Abraham, 11th son of Jacob, favoured by his father, received dreams of his family bowing before him, shared those dreams, was taken by his brothers and thrown in a pit to await death, later he was brought out of the pit by his brother and sold to Ishmaelites who were heading towards Egypt. Jacob believed Joseph to be dead and was mourning and inconsolable.*

## BLESSINGS

**Read Genesis 39:1-6**

**2. Verse 2 says "The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered".**

**What do you think this means?**

*This could be a comment on Joseph's faithfulness and his exercising of wisdom leading to a "good life" (proverbs 5-7) or a fulfilment of the blessings of prosperity in Genesis 12. However, we need to see in the fullness of this story that prosperity often accompanies foolishness and suffering often accompanies wisdom.*

*We ought not to let our fear of falling into a prosperity doctrine hold us back from a simple answer that, in this instance, God's presence and influence was seeing prosperity gifted as a fruit of wisdom. We will revisit this in this study so do not stress if this question is left unsettled.*

## TEMPTATION

### Read Genesis 39:6-10

As Joseph responds to Potiphar's wife, he mentions "my master", "he", "himself", "his" 6 times in three sentences. However, when Joseph finishes his response, against the natural flow of his argument, he says "how then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?".

### **3. Why does this distinction matter for Joseph and matter for us as we daily face temptation?**

*Joseph has both a human and heavenly view of the situation (so to speak). He can see the human logic of the betrayal of a man who has been generous to him a slave. More so, he can see the greater reality of God's call on his life and that the creator has called him, mere creation, into His promise. We must always be aware of the reality; all sin is first and foremost against God, who has lovingly and generously called us into a covenant relationship with Him. Temptation must be fought with awareness of the human situation before us but with heart, soul and mind set on the God of all creation who has called us to be His own.*

### **4. Verse 10 highlights that sexual temptation is before Joseph "day after day". Unfortunately, this is the reality of sexual temptation for most, be it with another person, pornography or other means. What wisdom is offered in the same verse for an approach to this temptation?**

*"he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her." Joseph made the decision to not be put in a place where the temptation can eventuate into sin. We apply this in leadership as being "above reproach", however the motivation here is Godliness not reputation and is for all people not just leadership.*

### **5. How could you apply this in your life and fight against the temptations you battle? What are some other approaches to our fight against sin?**

*This could involve not being alone with a person who may be a temptation or moving your computer to the family room and leaving your phone outside your bedroom. It may be worth reminding your study that Jesus calls us to cut off the hand and pluck out the eye that causes us to sin (Matthew 5:29- 32). Some other topics that you might want to touch on could be; prayer, confession, accountability, habits, accessibility, conviction and focus on God.*

## **BETRAYAL**

**Read Genesis 39:11-20**

**6. Do you believe that Joseph did the right and godly thing in this situation? What was the end result for him?**

*Joseph was wise and obedient to God, the results were; his reputation destroyed and finding himself in prison for a crime he didn't commit.*

*Joseph is not immediately rewarded for his purity, wisdom and faithfulness, instead his path traverses through defamation and prison. Joseph is a reminder that the blessings of God are received in the reality of a broken world.*

**7. Reflecting honestly, how does this sit with you? The idea that wisdom, strength in resisting temptation, and being faithful may not result in any sort of material prosperity?**

## **BLESSINGS (PART 2)**

**Read Genesis 39:20-23**

**8. How does the unfolding of this story and verse 20 change how we read verse 2 “the Lord was with Joseph, so he prospered”?**

*The presence of God is a consistent reality. God's path for each of us may not match our description of prosperity but God is always working out His will, which is the greatest good for all of humanity.*

**9. Should we expect to prosper wherever we go like Joseph?**

*No, we may be faithful to God and unsuccessful in the worldly sense. Our prize must be God and our grip on the blessings of this world loose so we may hold steadfast to God. However, God may choose to use us like He did Joseph and bring material success to our lives, therefore, our calling is to be faithful with all He blesses us with and use it as a blessing for others.*

# APPLY

The temptation presented in this passage is sexual impurity, this can look very different today. However, the heart of the issue remains the same. Where comfortable, share with the group and pray together about your pursuit of purity and the temptations that you face.

Discuss where you can help each other.

*Remind the group of the need for grace and confidentiality. It may be helpful for mixed groups to split into male and female at this point or for couples to have a chance to speak with each other. This is a battle for the vast majority of Christians, be patient with those not comfortable to share.*

**10. The bible compares fighting sin to going to war, often we will say we are “struggling against a sin” yet we are not really in the fight. Do you feel your approach to pursuing godliness matches the call of God?**

**(Hebrews 12:1-4, Romans 6:12-14, Romans 8:12-14, 1 Peter 4:1-2)**

In all of this we must remind ourselves that we are saved by grace and continue daily in that grace. To bring the study to a close, Read Hebrews 10:10- 25 aloud (all together if you have split) as a group and pray in thankfulness for the forgiveness of God.

# CLOSE IN PRAYER

# STUDY FOUR

# GENESIS 40

Joseph's story in prison, again shows his divine favour, and the blessing he can bring. Yet despite his profound God-given abilities (his divination is God's wisdom through him) he remains forgotten. People intend evil. God can still bring about the good. You can be blessed and in prison.

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

**1. What stood out to you from the passage and sermon at church on Sunday? Were you challenged, encouraged, rebuked or did it raise any questions?**

**Take a moment to recap Joseph's story up until this point.**

## ENGAGE

**Read Genesis 40:1-8**

**2. The opening words of this chapter "some time later" paint a grim picture of Joseph's situation and its longevity. This is the same Joseph who was given dreams by God of his brothers and parents bowing before him. The situation seems dire, yet Joseph is still faithful, working with wisdom and excellence. Is there any encouragement you can draw from this?**

*We often like to imagine our faithfulness in the big moments of life, here we see a stretched-out time in prison for a crime not committed, yet Joseph is still serving with excellence. This is a great picture of faithfulness, just as much as running from Potiphar's wife or whatever big moments we imagine in our life. Everyday faithfulness is the most extraordinary.*



**3. The Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker were dejected because there was no one to interpret dreams. Joseph says "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams", why is the language used here so important and what about Joseph's response stands out to you?**

*I don't believe that we are aware at this point in the narrative that Joseph has the gift of dream interpretation, yet in His faith he is confident. However, it is not in his ability but in the sovereignty of God. We must believe the same about gifting and ministry; they all belong to God, not us.*

**4. Does our mindset around gifting line up with Joseph's? Are we simultaneously confident enough to step into the need while humble enough to know that no gifting belongs to a person but God alone? Is this view consistent with what you see in the broader Church today?**

*If we have this conviction it should manage to humble us where we are arrogant or self-reliant yet empower us where we step forward into ministry faithfully dependent on the extraordinary work of God. What Joseph offers them when he says "tell me your dreams" is not his gifting but his humility and faith in God's power.*

**Read Genesis 40:9-22**

**5. As Joseph interprets the dreams, the meaning for the cupbearer is overwhelmingly positive and the news for the baker tragically negative, yet Joseph delivers the interpretations faithfully. At times as Christians, the truths that we are called to speak are pleasant and favourable, however, the truth we believe can also cause tension or offence. What encouragement can we take from Joseph?**

*Again, Joseph is acting in faith, in God's sovereignty delivering the interpretations. Joseph's job is to pass the message, not to filter God's truth.*

# APPLY

Read Genesis 40:23

**6. Joseph is a man called by God for great things, gifted and excellent in all he does, yet he is ministering as a prisoner to prisoners in a foreign land, now we read that he is simply forgotten. What do the actions and circumstance of Joseph teach us about Gods providence and our circumstance?**

*There is no circumstance outside of God's will for your life, including long term hardship and struggle, including times where you may seem forgotten by God and abandoned. We often lose heart when hard or fruitless seasons last days or weeks but with reminders like this we can see that God's faithfulness may be at work over years or a lifetime, that we might only understand when we are with Him.*

**7. Also, what does this teach us about the boundaries of God's mission field?**

*There is no scenario you can find yourself in that falls outside the boundaries of God's mission field. This includes school, work, home and everywhere else we find ourselves.*

**8. If we truly believe that there is no circumstance outside of God's control and no scenario outside the bounds of God's mission field, how ought that affect our faithfulness? Our daily habits? Our prayer? Our Evangelism?**

# CLOSE IN PRAYER

# STUDY FIVE

# GENESIS 41

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Should we make plans, or seek guidance from God?
2. What struck you from last week's sermon?

## ENGAGE

**Read Genesis 41:1-14**

3. **Note verse 1 - how do you think Joseph might have been feeling towards God after the events of Gen 40:20-23?**

*2 years had passed between his interpreting of the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker, and the cupbearer's restoration and subsequent forgetting of Joseph's help - he might have been feeling as though God had left him, and His purposes for him had come to an end*

4. **What is the common factor between the two dreams that Pharaoh has?**

*In both, the skinny eat up the fat/well. The second dream confirms the first, as has been the pattern throughout the Joseph narrative wherever we have encountered dreams. This shows that they weren't just random dreams that emerged from a bad piece of pizza, but were carrying a message from the give of the dreams.*

5. **How is the previous experience of Joseph influential in what happens next?**

*His hardship in the prison and the opportunity to interpret the dreams of the cupbearer and baker in prison are now the cause for hm to be brought before Pharaoh and become highly influential.*

**Read Genesis 41:15-40**

**6. Who is the one doing the interpreting of the dreams (16)? How does that revelation help us to look back over what has happened so far with Joseph? (How is this confirmed by Acts 7:9-10?)**

*God is the one providing the interpretation (which likely means He is the giver of the dreams in the first place), Joseph is humble enough to give the glory to God in this circumstance when he could have claimed it for himself (like the Egyptian wisemen that Pharaoh normally consulted). Seeing God's hand mentioned explicitly here gives us confidence to know God was with him the whole time, which is confirmed by the Acts reading.*

**7. How do we see the intersection of guidance from God and wisdom in Joseph's comments in verses 33-36?**

*Joseph heeds God's direct revelation through the dreams (His 'guidance'), and uses that as the basis to make plans that will best address the situation that God has promised will occur (his 'wisdom'). Note that the dreams don't tell Joseph what to do, they just tell him that abundance is coming before a drastic famine.*

**Read Genesis 41:41-57**

**8. How do these verses show Joseph fulfilling the promise given to his great grandfather Abraham in Gen 12:3: 'all people's on earth will be blessed through you'?**

*Salvation from the famine comes to 'all the world' (Gen 41:57) through Joseph's God-given wisdom and power at Pharaoh's right hand.*

**9. Think back through the studies we have done so far in this series - how did God work through the little things to bring about huge things, in fulfilment of his great promises?**

*Hear your group's thoughts on this.*

**Read Philippians 2:-6-11 and John 6:47-51**

**10. Joseph is brought low in prison, then released from bondage, raised to the right hand of power, in order to bring salvation to the nations, through the provision of bread. After reading the verses from the New Testament above, how does Joseph's narrative help to prepare us for God's ultimate salvation in Christ?**

*Jesus is brought low into the grave when he is crucified; he is released from the penalty of death in his resurrection; he is raised to God's right hand to rule forever; he brings salvation to the nations through he himself being the bread of life that all may eat through faith and never be hungry again. All this Jesus did for us - Joseph's narrative helps to give us the contours to understand what Jesus was to do when He came (Joseph was a 'type' that was fulfilled by Jesus)*

**Read Luke 12:13-21**

**11. Joseph was wise for storing up grain in barns. What makes Joseph different to the man in Jesus' parable?**

*Joseph was 'rich towards God', in that he gave God the glory for all that He has given him in his life, and used his power to bring relief and salvation to others, rather than amassing a personal fortune for his own glory.*

## **APPLY**

**12. How does this passage help us with the question of whether we should make plans or seek guidance from God as we live our lives for him?**

**Pause to give thanks for God's gracious salvation brought through the Lord Jesus and all that he went through for us.**

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER**

# STUDY SIX

# GENESIS 42-45

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

What struck you from last week's sermon?

## ENGAGE

*This week's study is a little different, due to the length of the narrative.*

**Read Genesis 42-45 together as group.**

*You might like to divide it up amongst willing readers - try to get the flow of the story.*

**Note down any questions that arise from the story as you read through, and discuss these.**

**Then turn to look at these questions**

### **RECONCILIATION AND FORGIVENESS:**

**1. How does Joseph's response to his brothers in Genesis 45 demonstrate the importance of forgiveness and in the face of past wrongs? How does Jesus exemplify this in His teachings and actions?**

### **GOD'S PROVIDENCE:**

**2. Reflect on how God’s plan unfolded in Joseph’s life, from being sold into slavery by his brothers to becoming a ruler in Egypt. How does this narrative illustrate the idea that God can work all things together for good, as mentioned in Romans 8:28, including in the life of Jesus?**

#### **TESTING OF CHARACTER:**

**3. How do Joseph’s interactions with his brothers, particularly his testing of them, reveal his desire for genuine repentance and change in them? How does Jesus, in his ministry, often challenge people to demonstrate their faith and commitment?**

#### **THEME OF REDEMPTION:**

**4. Explore the parallels between Joseph being betrayed by his own brothers and Jesus being betrayed by Judas. How does Joseph’s eventual forgiveness and reconciliation with his brothers mirror Jesus’ offer of redemption and reconciliation with humanity?**

#### **SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD:**

**5. Discuss the role of God’s sovereignty in the events of Joseph’s life, including his rise to power and the famine that brought his family to Egypt. How does this reflect the overarching plan of God, culminating in the work of Jesus Christ?**

## **APPLY**

**Discuss what you can take from this passage into your week as a disciple of Jesus.**

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER**

# STUDY SEVEN

# GENESIS 46-47

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

**1. Can you think of a time when you trusted someone, but they completely let you down? What were the implications of this broken trust?**

*Some people may not feel comfortable answering this question, it's important to ensure you're conscious of who these people may be in your group as you ask this question.*

**2. What stood out to you from the passage and sermon at church on Sunday? Were you challenged, encouraged, rebuked or did it raise any questions?**

## ENGAGE

**Individually or as a group, take the time to read the whole passage (Genesis 46:1-47:27).**

**3. Where in this passage do we see explicit interaction with God?**

*Although this passage is very large, the only explicit interaction with God comes right at the start of the passage when he calls out to Jacob/Israel (46:1-4). Some people may wonder why God isn't mentioned explicitly more in this passage – it would be helpful here to emphasise God's continuous work in the background, even if not explicit in the passage. We'll dive into this further later in the study, but if helpful, please feel free to explore this further here.*



**Read Genesis 12:1-3 and Genesis 28:10-15.**

**4. What is the significance of Jacob's interaction with God?**

*The most important thing to see here is that God reiterates his promise and covenant he made with Abraham. The language is identical to Genesis 12:2, showing us that God is consistently seeking to keep his promise. He interjects intentionally here to abate any fears Jacob may have that going to Egypt would undermine the covenantal promise God made with Abraham. The language "I am God, the God of your Father" (46:3) also bears resemblance to God's interaction he had with Jacob earlier in Genesis 28:13 – he is affirming his steadfastness and trueness in holding to the covenant he has promised.*

**Read Genesis 46:31-47:12 and Genesis 47:27.**

**5. How does God show his faithfulness to his covenant in this passage?**

*He uses Joseph to bring Jacob and his family safely into Egypt, settles them there, and allows them to be "fruitful" and to "greatly increase in number" (47:27).*

**6. How does this passage establish hope for Jacob and his descendants?**

*It establishes hope in two ways. First, it establishes hope in that it physically provides Jacob and his descendants with a place to settle and live as God's people, allowing them to be fruitful and to be a blessing as they do so. Secondly, it establishes hope because it again affirms God's trustworthiness – and the confidence in God that results from this should lead to a true and concrete hope that he will keep all his promises, most notably the covenant with Abraham.*

**Read Genesis 46:1-7.**

**7. How does Jacob respond to God? What is the significance of this response?**

*Jacob responds by being obedient to God, taking his entire family down to Egypt. Jacob's response demonstrates his absolute trust in God, and his willingness to rely on God's sovereignty and his trustworthiness in keeping his promise.*

**Read Genesis 41:15-36 and Genesis 47:13-26.**

**8. How does God show his sovereignty in these passages?**

*God interprets Pharaoh's dreams and brings to fruition the interpretation that Joseph shared with Pharaoh.*

**9. How does Joseph show his trust in God in these passages?**

*When interpreting the dreams in Genesis 41, he ascribes his ability to interpret fully to God. Joseph's trust in God in leading the Egyptians to prepare for the famine that God had revealed was to come (41:33-36) led to Joseph being able to care for the Egyptians when the famine did come. Finally, when dealing with seemingly insurmountable odds (the seven year famine), and people complaining and starving, Joseph continues to use the gifts and position God has placed him in to care for the people (47:13-26).*

## **APPLY**

**10. How should God's sovereignty and trustworthiness impact your life?**

*In this question, it's important to guide the conversation with two emphases: God's sovereignty and trustworthiness should impact how we think about the here and now (it means that he ultimately has a plan for me, even if I can't feel it or understand it right now), but also our eternity (it legitimises the promises of our eternal future that await in passages such as Revelation 21:1-7 – this may be a helpful passage to read here). Practically, it should also motivate people to evangelism, knowing the sure hope we have in Jesus and the certain death that awaits all who reject God.*

**11. How can you learn to trust in God more?**

**12. How can we, as Christians, encourage one another to lean into God's sovereignty and trustworthiness?**

**13. What in your life do you need to trust God with now?**

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER**

# STUDY EIGHT

# GENESIS 48-49

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What stood out to you from the passage and sermon at church on Sunday? Were you challenged, encouraged, rebuked or did it raise any questions?

## ENGAGE

*This week's study is a little different, due to the length of the narrative.*

### Read Genesis 48

2. What is said about Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh?
3. How does the blessing Jacob gives them remind us of the way in which Jacob was blessed by Isaac? (See Gen 26:34 - 27:41)
4. How does this show how God subverts human expectations about where his blessings will flow? How is this fulfilled in the gospel of Jesus and the church (see Ephesians 2:11-22)

### Read Genesis 49

5. Jacob gives blessings and curses to his children as he lies on his death bed. What is said about:
  - i. Reuben (see Gen 35:21-22 for background)
  - ii. Simeon and Levi

**iii. Judah (see 2 Sam 7:11b-16 and Luke 1:31-33 for fulfilment)**

**iv. Zebulun**

**v. Issachar**

**vi. Dan**

**vii. Gad**

**viii. Asher**

**ix. Naphtali**

**x. Joseph**

**xi. Benjamin**

**Read Galatians 3**

**6. How does God's faithfulness to Jacob and his sons play a part in fulfilling the promises given to Abraham (Gen 12:1-13) in a way that means our salvation and blessing today?**

## **APPLY**

**Discuss what you can take from this passage into your week as a disciple of Jesus.**

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER**

# STUDY NINE

# GENESIS 50

## Introductory leader's notes

*In this final chapter of Genesis, we see a resolution to relationships between Joseph and his brothers, but then a lack of resolution when it comes to the freedom of God's people. God's promises are becoming realised through the building of a great nation (their number is increasing) and they have influence over the most powerful empire of Egypt through Joseph's leadership, but they are about to lose that as Joseph dies. As we walk into Exodus, a new Pharaoh means Israel will face much deeper oppression under slavery. The story does not end with Genesis...it is only the beginning. Help people to transition well into Exodus at the end of this study.*

*There are two main themes to pick up in this chapter:*

- God is a God of reconciliation, even amidst our human relationships.*
- God's plans aren't always realised in our lifetime, but they are realised, finally, in Jesus. God plays the long game.*

## DISCUSSION STARTERS

### **1. What events in life do you think most change the dynamics of a family? Does God influence your family dynamics?**

*As we approach Genesis 50 with the death of Jacob and then Joseph, God's intervention in family dynamics play an important part. We want to help remind people that as God's people we are, at heart, a family.*

### **2. What stood out to you from the passage and sermon at church on Sunday? Were you challenged, encouraged, rebuked or did it raise any questions?**

# ENGAGE

**3. As we come to the end of Genesis, remind each other of the key events that have happened along the way. How do you think these events play into the big story of God in the Bible?**

*Have a quick walk through the studies... promises to Abraham, Joseph's brothers and his dreams, Potiphar's wife, prison, the palace, family reconciliation, Jacob's death. God's big story is the story of sin and redemption. How does that theme keep coming up? Think of things like imprisonment and freedom, starvation and provision, broken relationships and reconciliation.*

**Read Genesis 50:1-14**

**4. What stands out for you about the process of mourning and grief that occurred with Jacob's death? What do all these details add to our understanding of God's plans for his people?**

*Think about the process (embalming for 40 days, mourning for 70 days), the people involved (a very large company), the responses (they lamented loudly and bitterly), the geography (the threshold of Atad), the burial (Cave in Cannan). Compare the call of Abram in Genesis 12 – 1 old man and woman with no children – so much change has happened)*

**5. What place has death played in the story of Joseph? (and more generally, in Genesis)**

*Genesis 3 introduces death through sin. The murder of Abel, the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the attempted murder of Joseph, and natural death like Jacob. You could discuss here the different reasons/causes of death and how they play into the bigger story of redemption. That is, if you took death out of the equation, the whole story of Genesis changes dramatically!*

**Read Genesis 50:15-18**

**6. With their Father Jacob now out of the picture, what was to stop Joseph from enacting revenge on his brothers and their families? How do his brothers show their concern about this?**

*Joseph's brothers were very worried that they did not now have the protection of their Father. Joseph was a powerful man and could do anything. They did not expect him to actually forgive them. The brothers lie about their Father's wishes to protect themselves. Joseph wept because they had to lie because of their fear of him. He is upset that their relationship has been so damaged.*

**7. In what ways does trust, or a lack of trust, inhibit our relationships in a family? How does this translate to our church family? How can families/churches build trust?**

*Joseph's family suffered from the beginning from a lack of trust. This festered and caused unending suffering and pain. Building trust begins with trusting God with our relationships. You could explore the role of prayer in building good relationships.*

**Read Genesis 50:19-21**

**8. How did Joseph offer his brothers and their families assurance?**

*"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good."*

*These days, people might say that Joseph had a high EQ (Emotional Quotient). But really, what we have here is someone tuned into God's plans more than their own plans. Joseph sees his place in God's plans. He sees what his brothers tried to do, and he sees that God's plans are always bigger than human plans.*

**9. In what ways to you need assurance in your life at the moment?**

*Pastorally, this is a great place to share some areas for prayer later on. And a good place to consider who needs follow up.*

**Read Genesis 50:22-26**

**10. As the chapter ends, there are a few phrases that tie us back into the beginning of the promises of God in Genesis 12, and a few phrases that point us forward to the next chapters for Israel. What language here causes us to look back and what causes us to look forward?**

*The literary devices here are interesting. First, the generational language, reminding us of the promise of God to Abram to make him into a great nation (22-23). Second, the promissory and "oath" language, reminding them of God's covenant promises (24-25). Third, the death and locational language in verse 26, quite starkly finishing the book – Joseph died, and was buried, in Egypt. In slavery. In someone else's land. God's promises have started to be fulfilled but are certainly not complete!*

## **Read Exodus 1:1-8**

**11. As time passes, we are about to see the promises of God trying to be “undone” by the evil of the world – a new Pharaoh in Egypt, tighter slavery, yet a growing number of God’s people/nation.**

**Reading this introduction in Exodus, what challenges do you see ahead for God’s people? What do they need?**

*Israelite influence is gone with Joseph’s death. The past is easily forgotten and God’s people are back into the depths of hard slavery. They need rescue.*

## **APPLY**

**12. How does Genesis 12:1-3 shape our reading of the struggle of God’s people? When will the struggle end?**

*God has made covenant promises. Nothing will stop those promises from being realised. But only in Jesus’ first coming will we see the certainty of the end of struggle, and only in his second coming will we see the end of struggle for God’s people realised. Until then, we live under the rule of God in a world dominated by evil.*

**13. What struggles do you continue to face each day in this world? How do you maintain your faith in God’s control over those struggles?**

*Of course prayer should be at the forefront of our battle. Ephesians 6:10-20 might be a helpful passage to conclude with, to remind us of the full cache of weapons God has provided us with to battle on.*

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER**