

SOVEREIGN IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

THE STORY OF JOSEPH THROUGH THE BOOK OF GENESIS

SMALL GROUP STUDIES

CONTENTS

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

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. 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”?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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

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?

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**

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

Read Genesis 37:12-36

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

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

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

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

**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?**

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)?**

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.

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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”?

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

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.

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?

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?

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?

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?

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?

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

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?

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

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

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?)

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

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'?

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?

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?

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?

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

Read Genesis 42-45 together as group.

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?

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?

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

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

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

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

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

Read Genesis 46:1-7.

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

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

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

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

APPLY

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

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

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

DISCUSSION STARTERS

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

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?

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?

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

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?

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?

Read Genesis 50:19-21

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

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

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?

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?

APPLY

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

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?

CLOSE IN PRAYER