

God Meant It All for Good
Genesis 46-50 (50:15-21)
Week 6

Opening

Be sure to hop onto the video call a bit early so group members aren't anxiously, awkwardly waiting. Remember you are the host, so just as if you were welcoming folks into your home, use these first few moments to welcome each participant by name. It means a lot to acknowledge everyone on the call and confirm you can see and hear them.

-if there are new folks joining your group, be sure to introduce them as well

Ask if anyone would like to open in prayer. They can pray on their own or use the prayer printed below. It also might be a good idea to reach out to a group member prior to your meeting and ask them ahead of time if they'd be willing to open in prayer. That's a great way to encourage participation without putting anyone on the spot. I like the consistency of praying the same prayer to center ourselves each week, but once again, feel free to have someone pray differently to open this week.

Holy God, as we gather again virtually, we ask that your Spirit would be at work among us to connect us and renew us by your Word and our fellowship. Give us wisdom and insight and strengthen our bonds with one another and you. In the name of our risen Lord we pray, Amen.

Depending on time constraints you may want to take a bit of extra time to check in with folks and see how they're doing. You could also wait and do this at the end of the session before closing in prayer.

Check-in question

What has been one insight from this study that has stuck with you over the past several weeks? A detail from the story you hadn't noticed before? A comment or question from another group member? A newfound curiosity for a part of the narrative?

*since we're doing these meetings on Zoom, some groups may want to add an extra activity to help folks feel at ease. There are some great games out there that you can play via Zoom. Reach out to Sarah if this is something you'd like to try out.

Read: (see attachment on "Ideas for Lengthy Passages") Either all of ch.46-50 or the text Ryan preached on (ch. 50:15-21) or something else all together

In addition to the broader questions below, I am including some other information about this passage and some other ideas to get conversation going; however, don't jump too

quickly to these as they shape the discussion. Be sure to first ask what the group thinks, and which parts stand out to them. Trust the Holy Spirit here !

CHAPTER 46

This chapter reminds us that Joseph's story is part of a great whole – the story of Jacob, of Isaac, of Abraham, ultimately the story of God's people. Those of us who have been surrounded by the western ideas of individualism may find it difficult to see that the work of God in Joseph's life is not just for the good of Joseph, but for the good of the nation of Israel, the people of God, and eventually each of us.

Below is a map of the trips taken by Joseph's brothers back and forth to Egypt during the famine. The green line below the others shows the journey of Jacob and the whole family from Hebron through Beersheba (where he has his vision from God) and to Goshen where Joseph has made arrangements for his family to settle.

You'll notice this is not a short distance to travel, nor is it easy terrain.



v. 34 – the Egyptians' aversion for shepherds is perhaps an aspect of their aversion to foreigners (Gen. 43:28 referred to their dislike of eating with foreigners). As shepherds, Jacob's family were not a settled people, and unsettled people often make settled people feel uneasy.

CHAPTER 47

v. 7 tells us that Jacob blessed Pharaoh. **What do you make of this? A pagan king being blessed by one of the prominent fathers of our faith?**

Perhaps it has something to do with the promise God made to not only bless the nation of Israel but that they were to be a means of blessing to all nations.

v. 19 – the people were not slaves in the sense that the US has known slavery but were more like sharecroppers who previously had their own land, freedom, and independence.

v.31 – Jacob bows low to Joseph just as his dreams had predicted

CHAPTER 48

v. 11 – Jacob is moved by the goodness of God that allowed him not only to see the son he thought he had lost forever, but his grandsons as well. **Have there been moments in your life where you too received more than you could have asked for from God's hand?**

v.12-20 the blessing of the younger son before the older is a theme we have seen over and over again in the story of Genesis

CHAPTER 49

v.3-4 Reuben's clan is small because he attempted to bolster his position as his father's successor by sleeping with one of his father's wives (35:22)

v.5-7 Simeon and Levi would be next in the line for leadership but they disqualified themselves by their violent action against Shechem (Genesis 34).

v.8-12 that is why Judah, Jacob's fourth son, found himself the ancestor of the leading clan in Israel, the one from whom the Davidic line would come.

These blessings bring up in our post-modern thinking issues of fairness. Why aren't all the brothers given equal (even if different) blessings? One scholar observes that this is often the way human life works out, "Different people have more brain power or more physical skills, or live in more favorable climates or more peaceful times. For the brothers and for us, the question is what we do with what we have."

CHAPTER 50

When we forgive someone, we take responsibility for the effect of their wrongdoing and its consequences, even though the responsibility really belongs to them. We refuse to let it have the effect that it logically should have. There is not much indication that the brothers feel contrite about the wrong they did. Their dominant feeling is simply fear for their own future. **What if Joseph had related to them in the way they related to him?** He does not ask himself questions about whether contrition is a necessary prerequisite for forgiveness.

v. 20. Joseph is not implying that God PLANNED for the brothers to do what they did. Maybe God did, but he does not say that. What the story illustrates is that God can take a negative human intention and turn it into something that can have a positive effect. **How have you seen this truth played out in your own life? Or elsewhere in the Biblical story?**

Remind folks of this claim and how it might ring true in the passage for the week:

Walter Brueggemann names the singular theological claim in the Joseph story is “the purposes of God are at work in hidden and unnoticed ways, but the ways of God are nonetheless reliable and will come to fruition.” This can be the place we come back to each week as we explore the story of Joseph.

1. What from this story confuses, inspires, or resonates with you? What questions or curiosities do you have about this passage?
2. What does this story tell us about God?
3. What does this story tell us about humanity?
4. In what ways does this particular passage relate to Brueggemann's idea of God's purposes? How might God's providence already be at work here?
5. What could this story have to say to us today in the 21st century? What about today during this global pandemic?

The Swedish Method



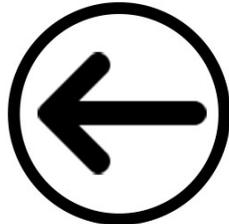
A light bulb should be something that “shines” from the passage — something new or fresh. *What stuck out to you this time through?* Every time we read the Bible, God will be reminding us of things we've forgotten and showing us things we haven't seen before.

And when we read the Bible in a group, he'll be revealing different things to different people, multiplying the insight and learning. God does not intend for us to see different *meanings*, but to learn the one true multi-dimensional meaning, and then to see some of the limitless implications and applications from that truth.



A question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the text, or a question the reader would like to ask the writer of the passage or the Lord. Did these verses raise any questions as you read? You might stumble over a word or verse, or a connection to another part of the Bible, or a particular theological point.

With every question you ask, try and answer your own question before going to others for help. Some of the deepest, most lasting learning we do comes when we press ourselves to search the Bible for an answer to our own question. The answer might be in the verse we're studying, or in the surrounding chapter or book, or God may bring to mind a verse or verses elsewhere in the Bible. Stop, pray, ask, and do your best. *Then*, turn to others (whether commentaries or other members of your group) for another perspective.



An arrow indicates a personal application for our lives. Identify and commit to something you sense the Spirit is leading you to do in obedience to this text. Make it specific enough that you can do it this week and make it personal enough that you yourself can do it (and not someone else).

A lot of Bible study, both privately and in a group, falls short of applying the text to our personal lives. One of the great things about studying the Bible in a group is that there's built-in accountability. If you talk out loud with others through steps to take toward greater obedience, you have other people around you to follow up and ask you how those particular things are going.

Arrow (Example): When I do my personal Bible reading, I am going to regularly ask if God might be 1) teaching me

something, 2) telling me to stop doing something I am doing, 3) correcting some wrong thinking or behavior, or 4) preparing me to live more effectively for him.

Closing

Remind the group of the Project 15:25 mission partner for the week and ways they can help. Perhaps your COB as a whole wants to join together to support the ministry.

Check in if you haven't already done so and ask for any prayer requests. Encourage group members to write down these requests and follow up as necessary. Close with prayer.