

VIDEO-BASED
8-SESSION BIBLE STUDY

THE LIVING ROOM SERIES

FINDING GOD FAITHFUL

A STUDY ON
THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

KELLY MINTER

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THE LIVING ROOM SERIES

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A STUDY ON
THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

KELLY MINTER

LifeWay Press® Nashville, Tennessee



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MEET THE AUTHOR KELLY MINTER

Kelly Minter is passionate about teaching the Bible, and she believes it permeates all of life. She's found personal healing and steadfast hope in the pages of Scripture. When she's not singing, writing, or speaking, you can find her picking homegrown vegetables, enjoying her six nieces and nephews, or riding a boat down the Amazon River with Justice & Mercy International. A Southern transplant, Kelly delights in neighborhood walks, watching college football, and a diner mug of good coffee with her closest friends.

Kelly's love for the Word of God led her to create Cultivate, an event centered around Scripture, worship, prayer, and missions. This gospel-centered, approachable event invites women of all ages to dig deeply into God's Word and encounter Him afresh.

Kelly's love for the Word of God also led her to write in-depth Bible studies like the one you hold in your hands. Those Bible studies include, *Ruth: Loss, Love & Legacy*; *Nehemiah: A Heart That Can Break*; *What Love Is: The Letters of 1, 2, 3 John*; *All Things New: A Study on 2 Corinthians*; and *No Other Gods: The Unrivaled Pursuit of Christ*. Kelly's music includes *Hymns & Hallelujahs*, which accompanies her *All Things New* Bible study.

Wherever the River Runs: How a Forgotten People Renewed My Hope in the Gospel is Kelly's first memoir about her life-changing journeys to the Amazon jungle with Justice & Mercy International (JMI). Kelly partners with JMI, an organization that cares for the vulnerable and forgotten in the Amazon and Moldova. To view more about Kelly's studies, books, music, and Cultivate events, visit www.kellyminter.com.

INTRODUCTION

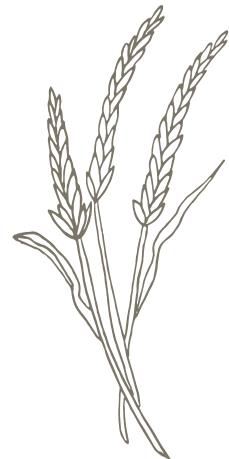
Joseph's story welcomes us with open arms, summons us into the living room, and invites us to sit down awhile and listen. So many have found a dear companion in Joseph because his life displays much of the human experience. We all "get" Joseph on some level. We can relate to him. We've probably never owned a multicolored robe that nearly cost us our lives or traveled as a slave by camel to a foreign land, but we patently understand difficult family relationships. We've experienced betrayal. We know unfair. Broken dreams have nearly sunk us. And almost every one of us has wondered at some point in our lives, *Where is God?*

Joseph's story doesn't necessarily answer all of our questions, but biblical stories rarely do. They actually accomplish something more important. Biblical stories reveal truths about God, our world, and ourselves, and in doing so, they sweep us into the much bigger story that's being told: the saving story of Jesus. In *Finding God Faithful* we'll discover that as epic and important as Joseph's account is, it's actually but a tiny act in God's grand narrative of redemption, The Story. While we study Joseph's story, we will pay best attention to God's.

So what does all of this mean for us? For the stay-at-home mom, the business owner, the newly married, or the single mom trying to make her way in the world in the twenty-first century? Well, I'm glad you asked. Genesis 37–50 (Joseph's account) reveals how deeply God loves us and wants us to love others—even those most difficult to love. (No matter who in your life is a challenging personality, just wait until you meet Joseph's brothers. They'll make your irritable Aunt Jane look like she's up for this year's Nobel Peace Prize.) On a very practical level, Joseph's life will encourage us to run for our lives from temptation, to serve when we're suffering, and to serve when we're prospering. And if you've ever wondered when to protect yourself from the people who have wounded you or when to lay down your defenses, throw your arms around your foes, and weep, Joseph's story can help. It doesn't give us a manual, but boy does it offer us an epic scene.

This is to say nothing of what Joseph's story teaches us about how God can take the stones thrown at us with evil intent and use them as the bedrock of His good plans for our lives. No one will ever describe the mystery quite like Joseph; "You planned evil against me; God planned it for good ... " (Gen. 50:20). Which brings us to another quite practical theme of Joseph's story: forgiveness. If Joseph could forgive his brothers, I imagine there's no one we can't learn to forgive.

For those of you who have ever wondered if your dark nights and crushing heartbreak were sure signs that God had forgotten or abandoned you, Joseph's story confidently tells us otherwise. In a faraway land, and later in a dismal prison, what more hopeful truth could be written than "God was with Joseph"? Whether in prison or in palace, His presence changes everything. Perhaps above all, in this study, I hope you will gather a richer understanding of God's promises, His faithfulness to His people, and the person of Jesus toward whom Joseph's entire story is aimed.





SESSION 1 VIEWER GUIDE

SET APART

GROUP DISCUSSION

What portion of the video teaching really resonated with you? Why?

God didn't give Abraham many details when He called him out of Haran. How does Abraham's act of faith help you trust in the God of the destination over the destination itself?

How do you think Abraham's intimacy with God deepened as he followed God's leading?

What does it mean to be set apart from the world, to be a blessing to the world (Gen. 12:1-3)?

We're often tempted to take charge of the tasks God has called us to instead of depending on His leadership. How can we actively follow God in obedience yet trust Him for the outcome?

Abraham obeyed God's leading. How have you seen God accomplish His purposes through your obedience? (Especially when you would have done things differently.)

Joseph was born into a complicated family, but that didn't keep God from setting him apart for a great purpose. How has God set you apart to follow Him despite your past or heritage?

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SESSION 2

THE UNLIKELY PATH OF BLESSING

My best friend and I sat on the front stoop of my parents' old house where we talked about our future plans and dreams. I was in college at the time, and she had recently graduated. I'd grown up in an intact family, while both her parents had had multiple marriages. "The bus is stopping here and I'm getting off," my friend asserted. I was well acquainted with her story and knew exactly what she meant. Despite having come from a line of indiscretions and broken marriages, she was determined to live a different life. She was hopping off the generational bus that had continually run the same sordid line, choosing to be led by Christ and not defined by her family's past.

It's been at least twenty years since that conversation on the stoop. I've never forgotten her line about getting off the bus—time has a way of proving which bus we're actually on. All these years later, she'd confidently tell you that, by the grace of God, Jesus has defined her life apart from the generational and familial patterns that often feel as inescapable as our DNA. If I didn't believe Jesus could do this, what we're about to study in Joseph's life would simply be an anomaly instead of a testimony to what God is still doing today—bringing beauty from ashes.

As we begin our study of Joseph's life, we're going to see a life that, given the circumstances, shouldn't have made it out of the teenage years, much less flourished. Without giving too many of the details away, Joseph was born into a family pierced by jealousy, favoritism, and competition—even murderous rage. His family of origin hardly set him up for success, spiritual or otherwise. On top of that, the tragic turn his life took as a young man certainly seemed irredeemable. Joseph's emergence as a humble leader who would save a nation can only be explained by the power of God to triumph over the power of our pasts.

As we begin our first week of personal study, I want to encourage you: Your identity need not stay rooted in past failures or past sin, even a past or harmful environment you had no control over. When you surrender to Jesus, the old and frail no longer have sway over the redemptive work He promises to do in your life. If God took what was meant for evil in Joseph's life and used it for good, will He not do the same for you?

DAY 1

SETTING THE STAGE

GENESIS 12:1-9

My grandfather, Charles S. Minter Jr., was an admiral in the Navy and the superintendent of the United States Naval Academy from 1964–1965. Since his death in 2008, our family has been enamored with any new bits of information about his life that turn up. My brother recently found a transcript of an interview my grandfather did in the '80s. In that transcript we found pieces of news even my father didn't know, like the fact that my grandfather's grandfather was a Presbyterian minister in Covington, Virginia.

In light of this discovery, I couldn't help but wonder if my great, great grandfather and his wife ever specifically prayed for the generations that would follow them. Did they ask God for their descendants to love Him, His Word, and His people? Is the work my Dad has been doing as a pastor for more than forty years and the work I'm doing now something seeded in us by God through the prayers of people we've never met? Of course God is always at work before any of us arrive on the scene, but it's been interesting to consider the ways He might have been working before me in my ancestors.

Similarly, I believe understanding Joseph's story will be far more meaningful to us once we understand how God moved in the people before Joseph. When I say *similarly*, I mean in principle only; God did something unparalleled in the life of Joseph's great, great grandfather Abraham that would not only change Joseph's life but would change the world forever. We'll trace some of those happenings so we can best appreciate what God was doing in the lives of Joseph, his brothers, all of Israel, and eventually you and me. But not all today—sorry, if I just stressed you out, because I just got a little overwhelmed myself.

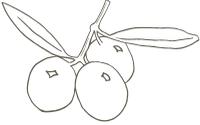
LET'S BEGIN OUR STUDY BY READING GENESIS 11:31–12:9.

According to 11:31, where was Abraham living when God called him to leave? (Note: God would later change Abram's name to Abraham in Genesis 17:5, so I'll refer to him as the latter.)



Joseph's story will be far more meaningful to us once we understand how God moved in the people before Joseph.

Pulling your answer only from 12:1, to what land did God call Abraham to go?



*I will bless those who
bless you, I will curse
anyone who treats
you with contempt,
and all the peoples on
earth shall be blessed
through you.*

Genesis 12:3

PERSONAL TAKE: Try to imagine being in Abraham's position. How would God's vague instructions about your future destination be difficult for you?

According to 12:3, who specifically would be blessed through Abraham as a result of his obedience to God's leading?

God's covenant with Abraham is the bedrock of our study, so we're going to commit to memory three promises God made to Abraham:

1. **Land:** God promised Abraham and his people the promised land of Canaan.
2. **Descendants:** God promised to multiply Abraham's descendants, making nations come from him.
3. **Blessing:** God promised to bless Abraham and to bless all the peoples of the world through Abraham.

By majestic grace, God pulled Abraham from his father's family, a family that served other gods (Josh. 24:2), and told Abraham He would bless him, multiply his family, and make him into a blessing for the whole world. And there began the beginning of Israel's history.

Note: Joseph was born only two generations after God's covenant with Abraham. Hold onto this significant information.

READ GALATIANS 3:7-9.

In verse 8, the apostle Paul quoted from Genesis 12:3. As part of God's promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed, who has God justified?

What is required to be blessed through Abraham? Paul uses the word four times in these verses. (Circle the best answer below.)

Belief

Righteousness

Faith

Passion

We're left with a question that begs to be asked, *Faith in what?* The prevailing thought of our day is to have faith in yourself and believe that you're enough. I know myself too well to feel good about this premise. We see another widely accepted option in our current culture: put your faith in a variety of things—certain religions, regular trips to the yoga studio, healthy eating, or the general good of humanity. The apostle Paul helps us narrow this down.

CONTINUE READING GALATIANS 3; LET'S MOVE TO VERSES 13-14.

Who redeemed us and therefore is the only one worthy of our faith?

What did Jesus redeem us from?

What did we receive as part of God's promise to Abraham?

The connections Paul makes between God's covenant with Abraham and Jesus' redemption of the Gentiles will continue to crystalize throughout our study. In the meantime, I simply want you to see that there are connections. You and I are part of the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham all those thousands of years ago in the desert of Haran, a promise He later affirmed in the land of Canaan. As we study the life of Joseph, we'll watch this promise unfold, following it all the way to our modern-day lives and beyond.

Since God's call to Abraham affected all of humanity, tracing his family line to the arrival of Joseph will give us further insight into Joseph's story and our own. If you're thinking this activity will be fairly straightforward, keep in mind these were not the days of a single-spouse marriage with two kids and a white picket fence. Family lines in the ancient Near East usually included at least a couple of wives for every man, a few maidservants, and multitudes of half-siblings among the children. And their figurative white picket fence encompassed the entire land of Canaan, a boundary line half the descendants didn't pay attention to anyhow.

Intrigued? Here we go.

READ GENESIS 17:15-19.

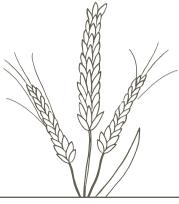
Ishmael was the son of Abraham and Hagar, Sarah's maidservant; Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah. Through which son would God's covenant with Abraham continue? (Circle the correct answer.)

Ishmael

Isaac

READ GENESIS 25:19-20,24-26.

What are the names of the twins born to Isaac and his wife, Rebekah?



At some point in our walks with Christ we have to let go of what we think we know is best and take hold of what He says is best.

READ GENESIS 25:22-23 AND 28:1-4.

With which of Rebekah and Isaac's sons did God confirm His covenant? (Circle the correct answer.)

Jacob

Esau

READ GENESIS 29:21-28.

What two women did Jacob marry?

So far we've learned that God made a covenant with Abraham. God then confirmed that covenant through Abraham and Sarah's son, _____. He continued to confirm it through Isaac and Rebekah's son _____.

We're now circling in on the central figure of our story: Joseph.

READ GENESIS 30:22-24.

Continue filling out the family tree. Joseph's father was _____ and his mother was _____.

You've pieced a lot of genealogical information together today. Well done! If you feel like all you've done today is list the names of some abstract people, let me assure you more family chaos and relational mayhem are attached to these people than you and I have ever seen. You'll really enjoy tomorrow's drama—if you like that sort of thing, of course.

As we close our first day together I want to return to where we began—Genesis 12:1. God told Abraham, I want you to leave your land, your relatives, your father's house, and go to the place I will show you. This verse perfectly sums up our faith journey, doesn't it? At some point in our walks with Christ we have to let go of what we think we know is best and take hold of what He says is best. We have to forsake what feels so natural, and what we've grown accustomed to, for what He promises will give us life. **God doesn't often give us a clear picture of the places we're going, only a clear picture of Himself so we can follow Him there.**

PERSONAL RESPONSE: How does Abraham’s faith to follow God into the unknown challenge and encourage you? Take some time with this.

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:7.

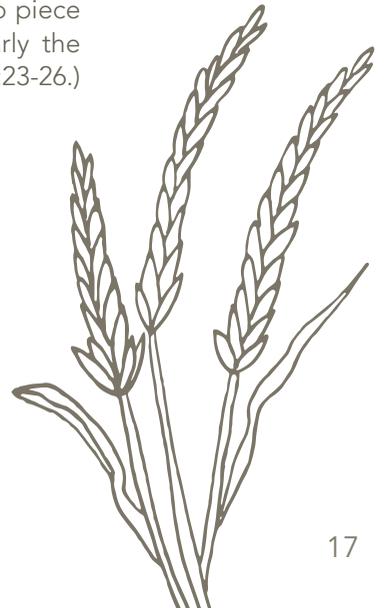
By what means do we walk with God?

READ HEBREWS 10:23.

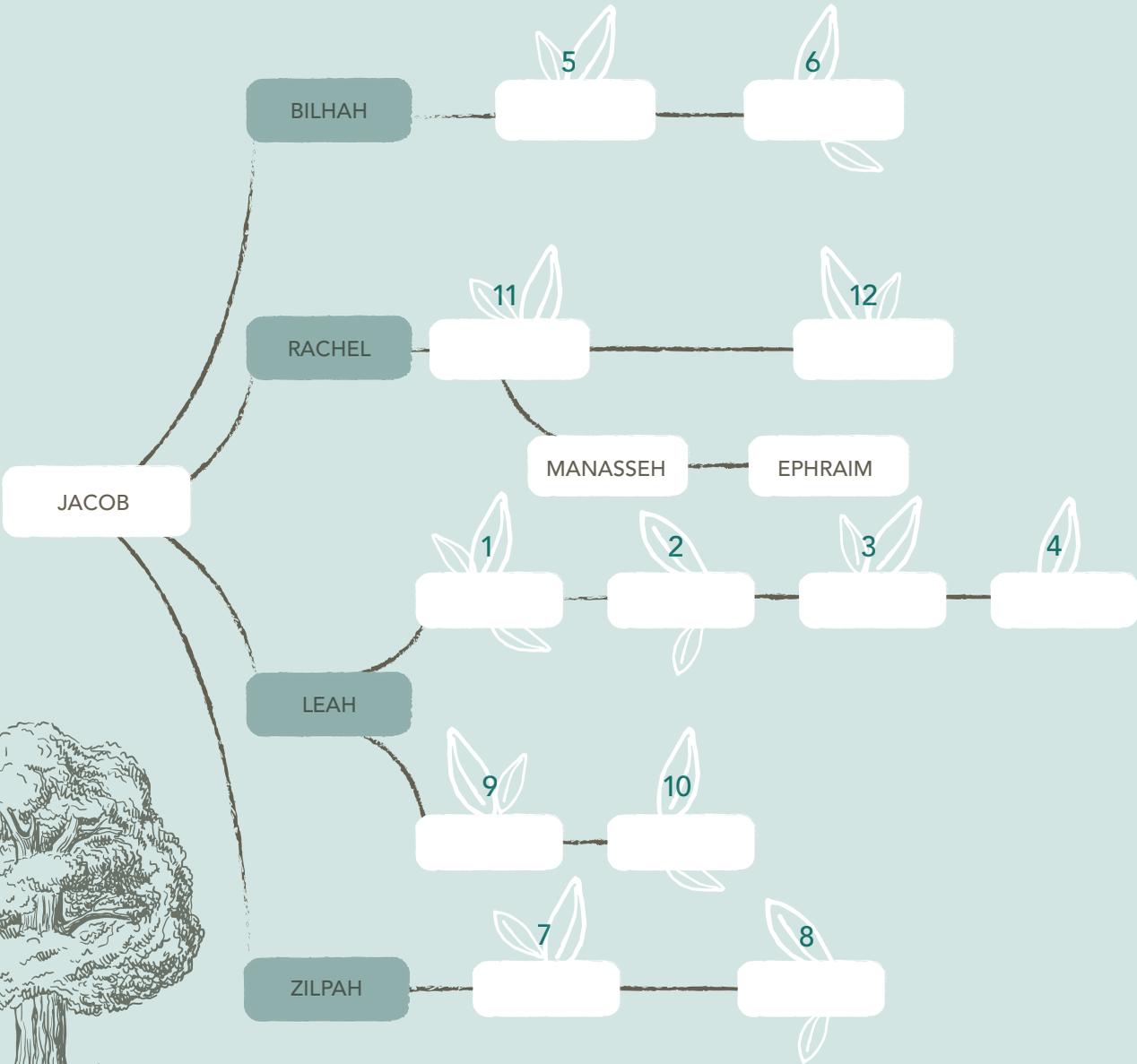
What encourages and inspires us to hold onto the hope we have in Jesus?

While Abraham’s faith is inspiring, I’m grateful God’s covenant plan didn’t rest on a human’s faith but on God’s own promises, which are secured in His character. I’m also thankful that those promises would prevail despite the human frailty, selfishness, and division that will characterize some of Abraham’s descendants.

In closing, go to page 18 and fill in the family tree with the names you read about today. I hope this exercise will help you continue to piece together God’s covenant through Abraham’s family, particularly the role Joseph will play. (For a succinct list of names, go to Gen. 35:23-26.)



JACOB'S FAMILY TREE



DAY 2

BORN INTO DRAMA

GENESIS 29:16–30:24

Anyone who's read books on psychology or been through counseling is familiar with the ways our families of origin affect our development and who we become. Thankfully, our families of origin don't have to dictate the trajectories of our lives—especially with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who has the power to renew us and break through generational patterns of unhealthy and destructive behavior (2 Cor. 10:3-4). Exploring the family Joseph was born into will give us a clearer picture of who he was and the struggles he faced. Today is going to be fun, if for no other reason than we'll be dealing with someone else's drama instead of our own, which is always more enjoyable for me.

READ GENESIS 29:16-30. YOU COVERED SOME OF THIS PASSAGE YESTERDAY, BUT READ IT AGAIN IN VIEW OF LEAH'S PLIGHT.

PERSONAL TAKE: In what ways did Laban set up Leah for heartache and rejection? How might this have affected her overall well-being as a wife and mother?

READ GENESIS 29:31–30:24. I KNOW THIS TEXT IS A BIT LONGER, BUT IT PROVIDES HELPFUL CONTEXT AND WILL SETTLE YOU INTO THE STORY.

What did Rachel have that Leah desperately wanted? What did Leah have that Rachel desperately wanted?

What did Leah hope having children would do for her relationship with Jacob? List every hope. (See Gen. 29:32; 29:34; 30:20.)



Thankfully, our families of origin don't have to dictate the trajectories of our lives.

Even though Jacob chose Rachel as the love of his life, describe her overall state in Genesis 30:1.

How did Rachel try to “fix” her problem of not being able to bear children?



Then God remembered Rachel.

Genesis 30:22a

PERSONAL TAKE: How would the angst, jealousy, and longing in both of Jacob’s marriages have affected the environment the children grew up in? What kind of effect would it have had on the children’s relationships with one another?

Remember, we began our study by looking at God’s covenant with Abraham—to bless his family and bring a great nation from him. So far things aren’t looking as promising as I would have hoped.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Are you currently hanging on to one of God’s promises in the midst of what feels like a complicated disaster? Or maybe you’re hanging on to His presence in a state of unfulfilled longing? If so, how does today’s passage encourage you, in light of the fact that God used this broken family to fulfill His promises?

LOOK BACK AT GENESIS 30:22-24.

What did Rachel say had been taken away from her when Joseph was born?

The Hebrew word used here for disgrace (or reproach) is *herpâ*, and it means a “state of dishonor and low status.”¹ In ancient Hebrew culture, a woman’s worth was bound up in her family. Her legacy was based on her ability to bear children, especially sons, who would carry on the family name.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Given this cultural insight and everything else you've read today, describe how Rachel might have felt when she held Joseph in her arms, knowing that God Himself had reached down and taken away her disgrace.

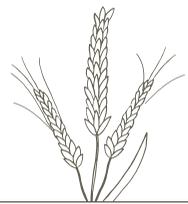
Remembered is another important word in verse 22, "Then God *remembered* Rachel" (*emphasis mine*). First, "when the Lord 'remembers' in Genesis and Exodus, this activity is often tied to God's covenant with Israel."² And by using the word, *remembered*, the narrator is signaling to us that God's upcoming work in Rachel's life is significant to His covenant with Abraham and the future nation of Israel. Rachel is part of a grander story.

The word *remember* in the Old Testament also indicates God's action. This might be confusing for us because our modern usage of *remember* gives the impression that for all these years God had forgotten Rachel. It sounds almost as if after having divinely arranged Rachel and Jacob's meeting and after a lovely wedding reception, God plumb forgot to put her pregnancy on His calendar. Fortunately, this is not what the word means here at all. Robert D. Bergen says it this way, "'Remembered' is a soteriological verb when used with the Lord as the subject and suggests the initiation of a major new activity by the covenant-making God" (*emphasis mine*).³

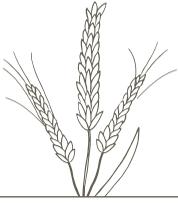
God's remembering us will never be separated from His divine activity and His perfect timing in our lives. While Rachel was waiting on the Lord for a child, He was preparing to give her a son who would have a profound effect on the future of God's chosen people. Though Rachel had prayed for many years, seemingly to no avail, God heard her prayers and had a far greater plan than she could have imagined.

PERSONAL RESPONSE: What are you waiting on the Lord for? How does Rachel's experience encourage you to hope in God's divine activity in your circumstances as you pray and seek Him?

While it's good to wait on God for the things we long for, how we wait on Him is just as important. In your waiting, tell the Lord you trust His timing and believe in His power to achieve your heart's desire. Surrender your agenda to Him. And where your faith lacks, pray these words from Mark 9:24, "I do believe; help my unbelief!"



*Soteriological: (adj.)
dealing with the
doctrine of salvation*



*Grace showed up
anyway in the arms
of a broken woman
named Rachel, in the
form of a baby boy
named Joseph, by the
power of Yahweh, the
God of Israel.*

Today we welcomed our study's main character, Joseph, into the world. We learned that his birth was a profound joy to Rachel and that through it Almighty God had taken away her disgrace. We also discovered that Joseph's birth came about because God keeps His promises. He was faithful to remember Rachel because He remembered His covenant with Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through his family. (Of course, at Joseph's birth, no one could have imagined Joseph would accomplish that blessing from a position of power in Egypt.)

God acted at just the right time. Abraham's descendants were a bit of a mess, yes, but grace showed up anyway in the arms of a broken woman named Rachel, in the form of a baby boy named Joseph, by the power of Yahweh, the God of Israel.

DAY 3

FAVORITISM AND JEALOUSY

GENESIS 37:1-11

Today we step onto the soil where Joseph grew up. We find him as a seventeen-year-old tending sheep with his brothers in the midst of complex family dynamics, many of which stemmed from the favoritism of his father and the jealousy of his brothers. If you'd hoped we could ease into Joseph's story with a cup of chamomile and a "once upon a time" opening line, the author of Genesis gives us no such luxury. Instead he takes the more direct approach of immediately plunging us into the middle of a dysfunctional family. If you need that cup of tea, you'll have to pour it yourself or come over to my house.

If nothing else, many of us will find these pages of Genesis relatable. Despite the cultural differences of wardrobe choice, empty cisterns, and bizarre dreams involving bowing sheaves, the longings of the human heart appear to have stayed the same. Thankfully, the God who transforms our hearts hasn't changed either. And with that hopeful reminder, we'll begin our story.

READ GENESIS 37:1-11.

Write down anything that stands out to you from these verses and explain why it stands out.

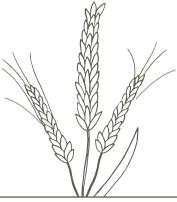
Compare Genesis 37:3 with Genesis 25:27-28 and 29:30. What problematic similarities do you see in these passages?

Look back at Genesis 33:1-3. What generational seed planted by Isaac and Rebekah showed up in Jacob's marriage and parenting?



As we address the deeper issues of favoritism and jealousy that fractured Jacob’s family, my prayer is for God to bring healing to our relationships that may be broken in similar ways and for similar reasons.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: If favoritism has affected your family of origin, current family, friendships, or work relationships, describe its effects below.



*When we show
favoritism to
someone, we don't
do so in isolation.*

Knowing the difference between favoritism and a special love or fondness for someone can be difficult. Doing something for someone based on what I’ll receive in return can be an indicator of unhealthy favoritism, as is doing something for someone out of fear of losing them. Perhaps the simplest way of putting it is this: While love and friendship are based on selflessness, favoritism is typically based on selfishness.

**TURN TO THE NEW TESTAMENT, AND READ JAMES 2:1-9.
(HOLD YOUR PLACE IN JAMES. WE’LL BE BACK THERE AT
THE END OF TODAY’S STUDY.)**

Why did the person in this example show favoritism to the one and not the other?

Why does James specifically say we shouldn’t show favoritism?

When we show favoritism to someone, we don’t do so in isolation; others in our lives are affected. In the James passage, because the rich person was favored, the poor person was obviously shamed. Likewise, in Genesis, Joseph’s brothers were hurt by Jacob’s favoritism of him.

List the strong words of animosity used to describe the brothers’ feelings toward Joseph. (See Gen. 37:4-5,8,11.)

I’ve often wondered why Joseph shared his dreams with his brothers. Did he do it out of excitement or spite? Did he hope they might start showing him respect? We’re not told Joseph’s motives in the biblical narrative, but the effects of his confession on the brothers are obvious. I’m reminded here of the importance of pure motives and wise timing when we talk about the good and exciting things in our lives—even the things God is doing. **While we can’t make others jealous, we don’t want to unwisely foster it.**

PERSONAL REFLECTION: In our age of social media, how can you be thoughtful about what you choose to share and not share based on today's passages?

Because of Joseph's dreams and Jacob's partiality toward Joseph, the brothers allowed jealousy to overtake their hearts and determine their decisions. *The Dictionary of Biblical Languages* defines of *jealousy* as, "having a feeling of ill will ranging even to anger, based on a perceived advantage, or a desire for exclusivity in relationship."⁴

PERSONAL TAKE: Define *jealousy* in your own words.

I think of jealousy as being consumed with resentment toward someone because he or she has what I think I need for life and happiness.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Is there anyone you're jealous of right now? If so, write down the reason behind your jealousy.

TURN BACK TO JAMES AND READ 3:13-18.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Why do you think jealousy (or envy) and selfish ambition produce disorder and evil practices? Take some time to think about this.

James describes what happens when selfish ambitions rule our lives and relationships. But he also paints an inspiring picture of a person whose life is characterized by wisdom that's pure, gentle, and full of mercy and peace. When I'm given to jealousy I look nothing like this wise, gentle, and peaceful person.

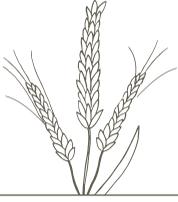
The past couple of years I have experienced some uncanny challenges in my work. While a close friend of mine was prospering in the exact area in which I was drowning, I battled jealousy. (I don't know what jealousy looks like on you, but it looks terrible on me—worse than the time I cut my own bangs in junior high and thought wearing a pink bandanna would help. Truth.)

I had to recognize that Jesus doesn't love my friend more than He loves me just because He's given her the very thing I want, the thing I'm pretty sure I need. In my place of longing God has invited me to trust Him and His goodness. **And when I'm secure in His provision, I can be**



But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without pretense.

James 3:17



*In my place of
longing God has
invited me to trust
Him and His
goodness.*

happy for those around me. My character becomes marked by peace and kindness, not the worldly wisdom of envying others and tirelessly grasping for what I want.

Today we leave Joseph caught between the crushing boulders of his father's favoritism and his brothers' jealousy. The removal of either of these obstacles would have helped restore peace to a fractured family. So that's what I want you to think about today. How can you remove partiality and jealousy from your life? It just might be the change that saves some of your most precious relationships.

PERSONAL RESPONSE: Is there someone to whom you're showing favoritism based on selfishness or your desire to control? Not only does this hurt the person you're favoring, the way it hurt Joseph, but it also hurts those in the vicinity, the way it hurt Joseph's brothers. Confess this to the Lord and ask Him for Christlike love to replace partiality.

PERSONAL RESPONSE: Are you jealous of someone? Confess your jealousy to the Lord. Confess to Him whatever it is this person has that you desperately want. Ask God to meet that need in you however He desires. He is good and delights to give good gifts to you (Matt. 7:9-11).

The beauty of Joseph's story is that in the midst of favoritism, jealousy, and anger, God is working out His purposes. His covenant promises will prevail despite the sin and brokenness of the people to whom the promises were made. God is faithful. This story would have been much less tumultuous if everyone could have recognized at the time that while God does choose different people for different things, He is altogether good and doesn't show favoritism (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11). I wish Jacob and the brothers could have known that Joseph's dreams would prove to be good news for them, that they were part of God's story, as well. By the end of our study together, I hope you, too, will be convinced of this.

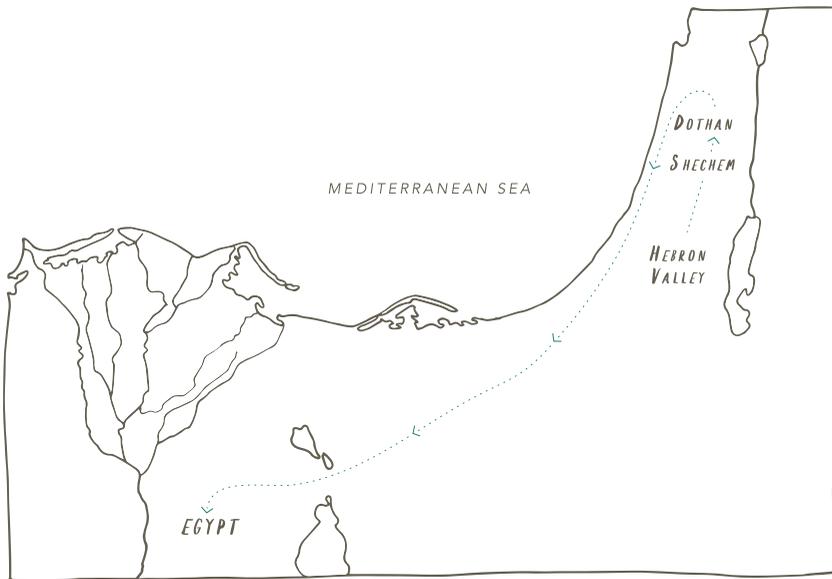
If you still need that cup of tea, my kettle is on for you.

DAY 4

WHEN WE DON'T UNDERSTAND

GENESIS 37:12-28

As you read today's passage be on the lookout for God's providential hand throughout the narrative. It's easy for us to think of God as being "way up there" in the heavens on His end of the universe while we plod along in our daily lives with little intervention from Him. But here in Genesis, long before the incarnation of Jesus, we see God at work on earth. We see Him moving in specific locations on the map, guiding people, orchestrating events, and working out His covenant promises.



JOSEPH'S JOURNEY

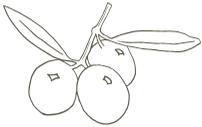
From memory, God's covenant with Abraham consisted of what three promises? (See Day 1 of this week on p. 14 if you need help.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

READ GENESIS 37:12-28.

Little did Jacob know when he sent his beloved son Joseph on a journey to find his brothers, Jacob wouldn't see Joseph again for more than twenty years. And he would never again see Joseph in the land of Canaan.

Joseph searched for his brothers by traveling north from the Hebron Valley to a place called Shechem. According to Genesis 12:6-7, what significant event took place in Shechem?



They said to one another, "Oh, look, here comes that dream expert!"

Genesis 37:19

Who do you think is the unnamed man in Genesis 37:15-17?

Jewish tradition views this man as an angel.⁵ I don't think we can know for sure who he is, but in the words of K. A. Matthews, "Whether the 'man' is an angel or a human, the unseen hand of the Lord is apparent here."⁶

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Describe a time you've "seen" the unseen hand of the Lord in the past year?

PERSONAL TAKE: At just the sight of Joseph in the distance the brothers began plotting to kill him. Genesis 37:19 gives us further insight into the reason behind their hatred. What was their reason, and why do you think it bothered them to the point of wanting to murder their brother?

We'll come back to Genesis 37:20 at the very end of our study. But, I want you to hang onto it throughout our time together, so finish the passage below.

"So now, come on, let's kill him and throw him into one of the pits. We can say that a vicious animal ate him. Then we'll see _____!" (CSB).

Out of the darkness flickered a bit of brotherly care and protection as Reuben pleaded with his brothers, urging them to throw Joseph into a dry cistern instead of killing him. We're told that Reuben suggested this plan so he could later rescue Joseph and return him to their father. Whatever Reuben's motives (he had previously angered his father so he may have wanted to use Joseph's rescue to get back in Jacob's good graces), it's a reminder to us that speaking up for what's right can have enormous impact. Maybe even save a person's life. Or thousands of lives.

The brothers' murderous plotting may be an extreme case, but the principle remains. It's easy to go along with the current of the crowd instead of risking something for the sake of an individual. It makes me think of Isaiah 58 where God talks about true fasting, "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, to bring the poor and homeless into your house, to clothe the naked when you see him, and not to ignore your own flesh and blood?" (v. 7).

PERSONAL RESPONSE: I wonder if there's someone the Lord is asking you to protect, defend, or stand up for. It may be your child's classmate, a coworker who's being falsely accused, a family member caught in addiction, or someone else who needs help. Write that person's name below and record what you feel prompted to do on his or her behalf.

According to Genesis 37:26, what was Judah's motive for deciding not to kill Joseph?

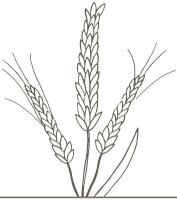
Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, the going rate for a healthy young man in the early second millennium. People from the land of Canaan are commonly found in Egyptian records as slaves in various roles.⁷ You would think that approximately four thousand years after this horrific scene human trafficking would be wiped clean from our world. Tragically, it is still happening all over the globe, even in our own backyards. (See note at the end of today's study.)

We've covered a lot of ground in today's passage, much of it painful to digest. We'll revisit Genesis chapter 37 many times near the end of our

story because we'll want to see how God was active and present even in the midst of such suffering and evil. I can't wait to look back with you and see how God—even in this situation—was taking what was meant for evil and turning it into good.

IN THE MEANTIME, TURN TO 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-5.

How is God described in verse 3?



What always overflows alongside our suffering (v. 5)?

What is one of the purposes of our suffering (v. 4)?

My prayer is that we'll better understand both suffering and sovereignty from the perspective of God's Word, so that we'll see His hand more clearly and trust His heart more deeply. Our God is good.

After reading today's portion of Joseph's story it seems as though God has lost control. It appeared Joseph was being kicked around the landscape like a rubber ball on an elementary playground. His father sent him to Shechem, a mysterious man redirected him to Dothan, and then his brothers, after deciding not to kill him, secured him a one-way ticket to Egypt by way of Ishmaelite traders.

The story appears senseless. Reckless. Out of control. Could God's providential hand still be at work in Joseph's life? Is it possible that what appears to be nothing but a tangle of other people's agendas will somehow be the very ball of yarn God will use to weave one of the most redemptive masterpieces in human history? We won't solve the problem of why a good God allows suffering, nor will we fully understand God's sovereignty at the end of our eight weeks together. But my prayer is that we'll better understand both suffering and sovereignty from the perspective of God's Word, so that we'll see His hand more clearly and trust His heart more deeply. Our God is good.

PERSONAL RESPONSE: What stood out to you the most in today's personal study and why?

Joseph's brothers may have been able to destroy his coat of many colors, but they would never be able to destroy the dreams God had given him. Hang on to that, dear friends.

Note: If the Lord is stirring in your heart to help fight against human trafficking, there are many organizations doing this important work. I work with Justice & Mercy International (JMI), an organization that stops trafficking in the developing Eastern European country of Moldova before it happens. To find out more, visit justiceandmercy.org.

DAY 5
GOD WAS
WITH JOSEPH

GENESIS 37:29-36; 39:1-6

We can get through just about any pain or suffering if we know the Lord is in it with us. But when we feel forsaken or abandoned, our pain becomes unbearable. In a most trying circumstance, the psalmist expressed what the Lord's presence meant to him with the imagery, "Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for *you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me*" (Ps. 23:4, *emphasis mine*). In Genesis 39, we'll see the recurring phrase, "The LORD was with Joseph." Joseph's entire story rests on these five words. They will prove to be an anchor in turbulence and reconciliation in what seems irreconcilable. In the words of Beth Moore, "Where God does not grant our request, He will grant us His comfort. No small trade indeed. He is everything."⁸ And He will be everything for Joseph.

READ GENESIS 37:29-36.

In what ways did the brothers deceive Jacob without flatly lying to him, and why is this especially troubling?

We're not sure where Reuben, the firstborn, went in between the brothers throwing Joseph into the pit and Joseph being sold to the Midianites. Reuben's absence, however, made way for Judah, the fourth born, to execute his own plan without interference. These may seem like subtle details, but Judah's influence over his brothers and his rising position will prove significant later.

Look back at verses 33-35. What was so insidious about Jacob's sons trying to comfort him?



*The LORD was with
Joseph.*

Genesis 39:2a

I'm trying to picture the scene: the brothers circled around their dad speaking comforting words to him, embracing him with loud cries, knowing all the while that his son wasn't dead, rather that he'd been sold at their very hands. Based on the brothers' fabricated evidence, Jacob drew his own conclusion that Joseph had been devoured by an animal. So technically the brothers didn't lie about what really happened, perhaps relieving their own consciences, albeit falsely.

While we're quick to condemn the brothers for their deceit, how many times have we tried to comfort someone we've hurt without first admitting the pain we've inflicted upon them? How many times have we tried to make amends without first giving an honest and heartfelt confession? How many times have we knowingly led someone down the wrong path without technically lying?

I have a friend whose husband has essentially abandoned their marriage. He feels mildly guilty for walking out on his wife and for the pain he's caused her. If he were truly repentant, he would confess his sin to my friend and turn his heart back to her. Instead, he justifies his wrongdoings and tries to comfort her by buying her gifts and paying her bills. Verse 35 reminds me that there's no chance of comforting those we've wounded without first having repented.

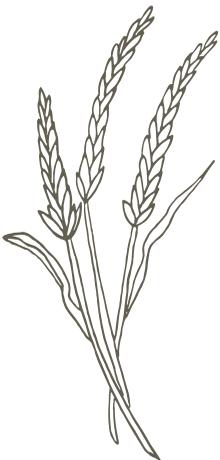
PERSONAL RESPONSE: Have you hurt someone and instead of admitting your wrong and repenting of it, you've tried to comfort them through gifts or actions? If so, make this right before God and the other person. You'll never be free and the person you've hurt will never be able to truly receive your comfort until you do.

Chapter 38 takes a detour from the life of Joseph and follows Judah on a wild journey out of Canaan. We'll come back to this chapter in future weeks.

IN THE MEANTIME, SKIP CHAPTER 38 AND READ GENESIS 39:1-6.

Into what nation was Joseph sold and to what person?

We began our study with God's call on Abraham's life and the covenant God made with him. Based on the land that God promised to give Abraham and his descendants in Genesis 12:4-7, why would arriving in Egypt have been particularly difficult for Joseph to process?



PERSONAL REFLECTION: Have you ever found yourself in a perplexing situation in which God seemed to be working contrary to your understanding of His plan? How does this turn in Joseph's life encourage you to trust God's plans and presence?

NOW LOOK UP GENESIS 15:13-14.

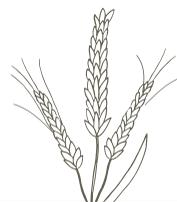
How might Joseph's forced trip to Egypt be linked to this prophecy God gave Abraham?

Many years before Joseph's descent into Egypt God foretold that the Israelites would be enslaved in a foreign land. We don't know if Joseph was aware of this revelation, but it shows us that God's hand was on Joseph's steps even though his journey must have felt fully to the contrary. (Note: I'm not suggesting that the evil plan of the brothers or being sold into slavery were somehow good things because God's plan was being worked out. We'll later hear Joseph refer to his brothers' actions as plainly evil.) The interplay between God's sovereignty and human evil is a mystery for the ages, but I'm hoping you'll see that what must have felt entirely out of God's will for Joseph (arriving in Egypt) was actually part of God's plan (Israel enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years).

Whether Joseph knew about God's revelation to Abraham or not, what information do we find at the top of Genesis 39:2 that will prove to change everything?

Whenever you see the name LORD in small caps in your Bible, it means Yahweh, the personal name of God. It's a name that would remind Israel of the covenant God made with them and of His self-existence, among other realities. The fact that the God of Israel was with Joseph in the far away and pagan land of Egypt is so profound and comforting, there's no way to overstate it. We simply can't imagine God's reach.

What two things about the LORD does Potiphar recognize, according to Genesis 39:3?



*We simply can't
imagine God's reach.*

PERSONAL TAKE: We're not given much detail, but how do you think Potiphar was able to clearly tell that God was with Joseph?

According to the passages below, what will cause others to see Jesus in our lives? Write your response next to each reference.

John 13:34-35

1 Thessalonians 1:4-7



*Certain blessings
can only come in
the midst of our
suffering.*

Looking closely at Genesis 39:5, what was on Potiphar's household and all that he owned? The Lord's _____, circle the correct answer below:

Revelation

Blessing

Kindness

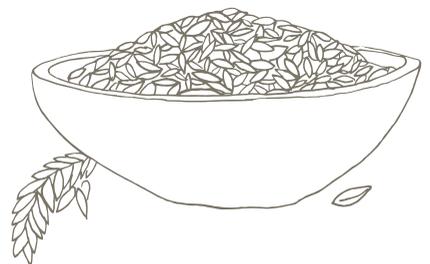
Judgment

In our western culture, we tend to think of God's blessing and our suffering as mutually exclusive. We think of blessing as all the good things happening in the middle of all the good times. But in Joseph's story we discover something that challenges our mind-set, even as believers: Certain blessings can only come in the midst of our suffering. In Egypt, Joseph was rising in power and position. He had found favor with his master, and his work was prospering. Still, all these blessings fell upon Joseph in a land far away from his family and in a culture that didn't worship his God. The blessings were abounding in the midst of His suffering.

I remember a time when I was hurting so badly that I refused to receive the blessings the Lord was bringing me in that season. I wanted Him to give me what I wanted and wasn't willing to "settle" for anything different. It wasn't until I chose to accept His path for my healing and His way of blessing that I began to change. I didn't get what I so desperately wanted, but all these years later I wouldn't dare exchange the blessings He's given me for what I once demanded of Him.

PERSONAL RESPONSE: Are you refusing God's blessings in the midst of your trial? Take some time to surrender your pain to the Lord. Tell Him you're willing to receive His blessings even if they look different than what you're hoping for. Thank Him for His presence with you, and ask Him to manifest that presence so that it brings you peace, comfort, and joy.

Next week we'll begin an exciting five days of study in the next chapter of Joseph's life. Take some time to process what you've learned and experienced this week because the story line ahead will be as rich as the one we've just covered. Keep asking the Holy Spirit to teach His Word to you, and thank Him for His presence on the journey.



SESSION 2 VIEWER GUIDE

THE UNLIKELY PATH OF BLESSING

GROUP DISCUSSION

What portion of the video teaching really resonated with you? Why?

Discuss the many ways favoritism damaged Jacob's family. How is it damaging to our relationships?

God created a path of blessing out of Joseph's difficult circumstances. How have you seen Him do this in your life?

It seemed as though God had lost control of Joseph's story. How does God's presence with Joseph encourage you that He is with us even in our hardest seasons?

Why do we often evaluate God's presence and work in our lives based on our circumstances? What would be a more biblical approach?

How has God evidenced His presence in your life in your most difficult moments?

God's blessing on Joseph spilled over onto Potiphar's house. How does this inspire you to bless those who don't yet know Jesus with the blessings He's given you?

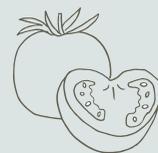
Teaching sessions available for purchase or rent at LIFEWAY.COM/FINDINGGODFAITHFUL

Classic Fiesta Dip (serves 10–12)

INGREDIENTS

- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- ½ onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 16 ounces ground beef
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 1 (16-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1 (4.5-ounce) can chopped green chilies
- 1 (8-ounce) package mushrooms, diced
- 1 (15-ounce) can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (14-ounce) jar salsa
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Everyone needs a fiesta dip recipe handy should a gathering suddenly arise. You can layer this dip or serve the ingredients side by side for a more visually pleasing presentation. This recipe, along with a companion recipe for homemade beans, is included in Kelly's cookbook, *A Place at the Table*. You can't go wrong.



DIRECTIONS

Preheat your oven to 350 degrees.

In a skillet over medium-high heat, warm the olive oil. Add the onion and garlic, sautéing for about 3 minutes.

Add the beef and cook, using a wooden spoon to break apart the meat. Add salt and pepper to taste, and cook until brown. Set aside.

In a 13x9-inch baking dish, layer the ingredients. Start with cream cheese, spreading in an even layer on the bottom of the dish. Then layer the ground beef mixture, green chilies, mushrooms, pinto beans, and salsa. Top with the mozzarella and cheddar cheeses.

Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes or until the cheese is bubbly. Serve warm with tortilla chips.