

8-SESSION BIBLE STUDY FOR TEEN GIRLS

FINDING GOD FAITHFUL

A STUDY ON
THE LIFE OF JOSEPH

KELLY MINTER

LifeWay Girls

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MEET THE AUTHOR



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 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.

A NOTE FROM KELLY



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 so much of the human experience. We all "get" Joseph on some level. We can relate to him. We've probably never owned a multi-colored robe that nearly cost us our lives, or traveled as a slave by camel to a foreign land, but we 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?*

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. So while we study Joseph's story we will pay best attention to God's.

So what does all of this mean for us? 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. On a very practical level, Joseph's life will affirm that we're to run from temptation, serve when we're suffering, and serve when we're prospering. And if you've ever wondered when to protect yourself from the people who have wounded you and when to lay down your defenses, throw your arms around your foes and weep, Joseph's story 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 most 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, what I hope you will gather from this study is 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.



HOW TO USE

In this study you will find eight weeks of group discussion and seven weeks of personal study. The Leader Kit includes eight 15-20 minute videos of Kelly's teaching adapted specifically for girls. The first session of the study begins simply with your group getting to know one another and watching and discussing the session video. Girls will begin their Personal Study for Session 2 after your first meeting and then continue through Session 8 of Personal Study, wrapping up *Finding God Faithful* by watching the Session 8 video and completing the Viewer Guide and Group Discussion.

BIBLE STUDY BOOK

Each girl will need their own Bible study book, which includes the following elements:

Introduction

Each session's two-page introduction will set up the week ahead and give girls an idea of what they'll be studying. Session 1 does not have an introduction since it is the first meeting. The general "Note From Kelly" is what you should point girls to read as an introduction as you first begin to meet.

Viewer Guide & Group Discussion

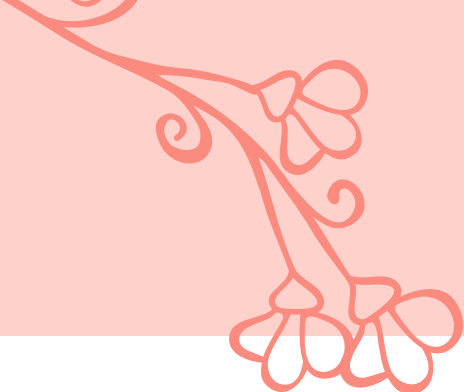
The Viewer Guide includes the points and fill-in-the-blanks from the session's video (answers in Leader Guide). There is also space for girls to take notes as they're watching. Then use the remaining time for the Group Discussion and prayer. Feel free to adapt the Group Discussion based on your group of girls and their context.

Personal Study

There are five days of personal Bible study which can be done at your own pace and will help reinforce and prepare girls for the next session of video content that will sum up the session. It is alright if girls are unable to get to all of the personal study. Encourage them to catch up if they are behind but be understanding if it's too time-consuming for some girls to complete.

Personal Response & Personal Reflection

This content in the sidebars allows for girls to dig deeper in their application and reflection as they further consider and think through what they're studying.



LEADER GUIDE

The Leader Guide at the back of this study provides a key with answers for the Viewer Guide, in addition to leader tips, a simple guide for how to lead this Bible study, and a session-by-session guide for leaders.

LEADER KIT

You will need one Leader Kit per group. This Kit provides all the session videos you'll need, in addition to social media content that will provide additional helps. Consider using the promotional video during your student ministry gatherings as you are initially sharing about this Bible study group. The message to leaders video is also something you might want to share with other Bible study leaders if you plan to take multiple groups of girls through the study.

Social Media Content

The Share Squares will be helpful if you want to encourage girls during the week by sharing these on social media or in a group message. The promotional video is also designed to share on social media in order to get the word out to girls about the Bible study.

WordSearch

You also receive access to free commentaries and other resources in WordSearch with your purchase of the Leader Kit. These resources will help you dig deeper as you prepare to lead this Bible study.



Session One

SET APART

*“You planned evil against me;
God planned it for good...”*

GENESIS 50:20



GROUP DISCUSSION

- ✦ Share and discuss what you want to learn and gain from this study in the coming weeks.

- ✦ Sometimes it's easy to get caught up in a culture that is all about us. How can we stand against the culture and seek to be a blessing to others?

- ✦ How does Abraham's faith to follow God into the unknown challenge encourage you?

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

- ✦ Why is waiting so difficult? What has God taught you in times of waiting?

- ✦ Have you ever found yourself in a perplexing situation in which God seems to be working contrary to your understanding of His plan? How does this turn in Joseph's life challenge you to trust God's plans and presence?



Session Two

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. She was choosing to be led by Christ, not defined by her family's past.

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, Joseph's life that we're about to study 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 had 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 study, I want to encourage you that your identity need not stay rooted in past failures or past sin, even a past and 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? 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.

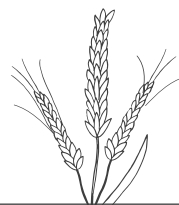
Similarly, I believe understanding Joseph's story will be far more meaningful to us once we understand how God moved in the people before Joseph. We'll trace some of those happenings so we can best appreciate what God was doing in the lives of Joseph, his brothers, all of Israel, and eventually you and 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 Genesis 11:31, where was Abraham living when God called him to leave? (Note: God would later change Abram's name to Abraham in Gen. 17:5, so I'll refer to him as the latter.)

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

RESPOND: Try to imagine being in Abraham's position. How would God's vague instructions about your future destination been difficult for you? For example: when it comes to college, boyfriends, jobs, and so on.



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

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



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

GENESIS 12:3

God's covenant with Abraham is the bedrock of our study, so we're going to look at 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 Abraham, 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. This is important to remember.

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 the question: *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 how many likes you get on Instagram, being on trend with your clothes and accessories, doing good things for others, and so on. 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 that Paul makes between God's covenant with Abraham and Jesus' redemption of the Gentiles will continue to crystalize throughout our study. 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.

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 25:19-20,22-26 & 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, _____.

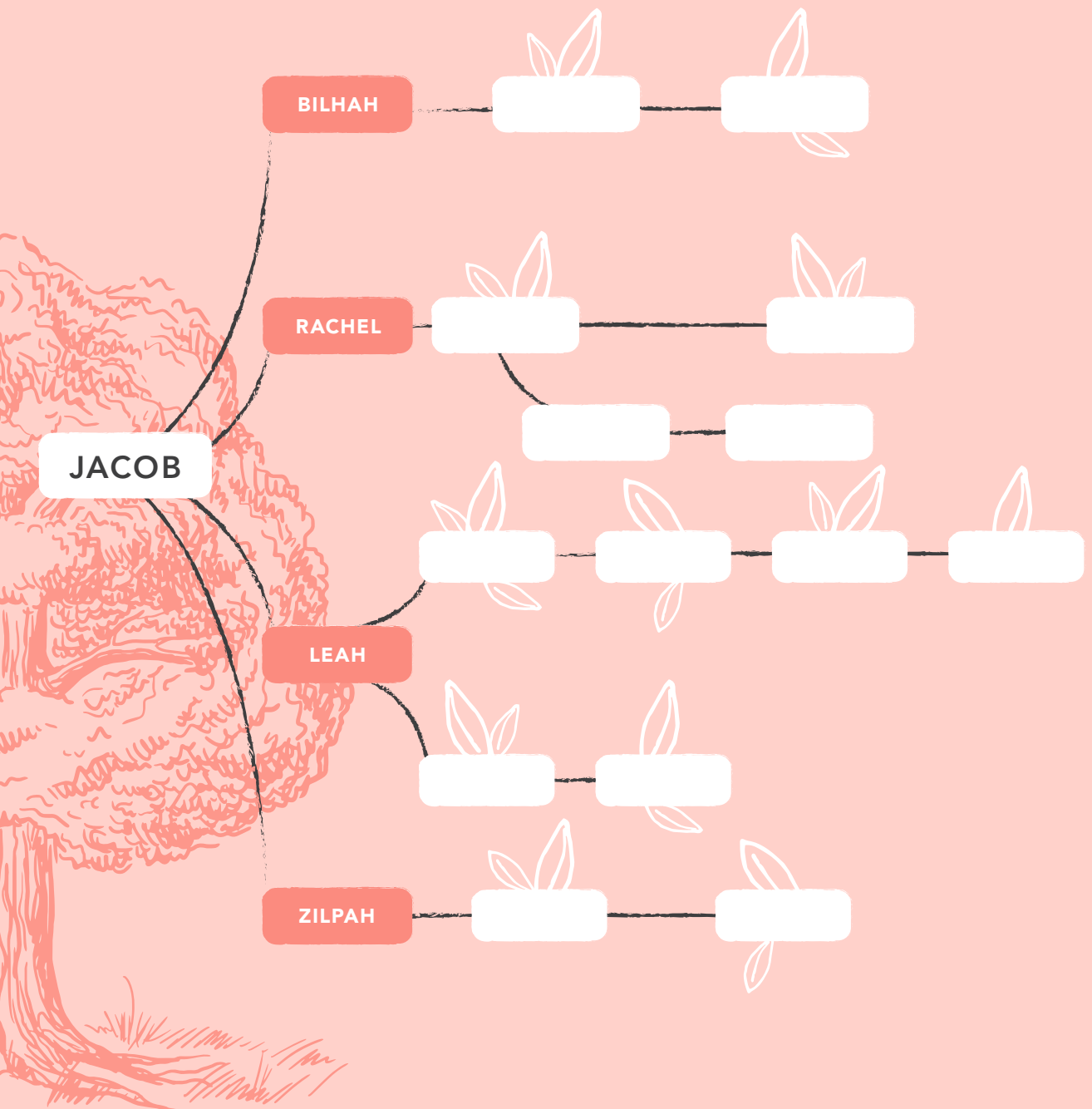
We're now circling in on the central figure of our story: Joseph.

READ GENESIS 30:22-24.

Begin filling out the family tree on page 18. Joseph's father was _____ and his mother was _____.



JACOB'S FAMILY TREE



You've pieced a lot of genealogical information together today. Well done! Now I want to briefly return to where we began—Genesis 12:1. 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. God doesn't often give us a clear picture of where we're going, only a clear picture of Himself so we can follow Him there.

While Abraham's faith is inspiring, I'm grateful that God's covenant plan didn't rest on a human's faith but on God's own promises, which are secured in His character.



For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds.

2 CORINTHIANS
10:3-4

Day 2

BORN INTO DRAMA

Genesis 29:16–30:24

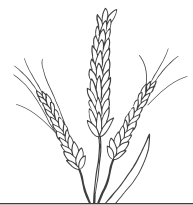
It's really easy to see that your family of origin (the family you were raised in) has a direct effect on your development and who you become. Thankfully, our families of origin don't have to dictate the trajectories of our lives—especially with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who has the power to 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.

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

RESPOND: 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.

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



God's remembering us will never be separated from His divine activity and His perfect timing in our lives.

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



*Then God
remembered
Rachel.*

GENESIS 30:22a

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?

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 it isn’t looking as promising as I would have hoped.

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

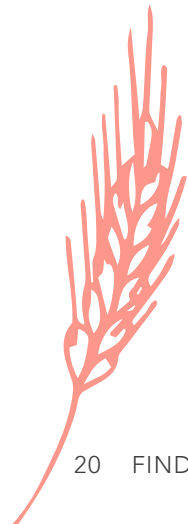
LOOK BACK AT GENESIS 30:22-24.

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

The Hebrew word used here for disgrace 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.

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 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*

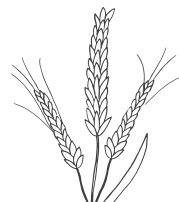


gives the impression that for all these years God had forgotten Rachel. Fortunately, this is not what the word means here at all.

God's remembering us will never be separated from His divine activity and His perfect timing in our lives. 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.

While it's good to wait on God for the things we long for, the way we wait on Him is even more 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!"

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.



*Thankfully,
the God who
transforms our
hearts hasn't
changed.*

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 latte 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. Thankfully, the God who transforms our hearts hasn't changed. 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.

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.

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?



*And the fruit of
righteousness is
sown in peace
by those who
cultivate peace.*

JAMES 3:18

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? 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 be jealous of us, we don't want to unwisely foster it.

RESPOND: In our age of social media, how can you be more 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.

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

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



**PERSONAL
RESPONSE**

*If favoritism
has affected
your family,
friendships,
or school
relationships,
describe its
effects below.*

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.

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.

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 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.

RESPOND: Think about someone you are jealous of and confess your jealousy to the Lord. Confess 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 true 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. We know that 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.

Day 4

WHEN WE DON'T UNDERSTAND

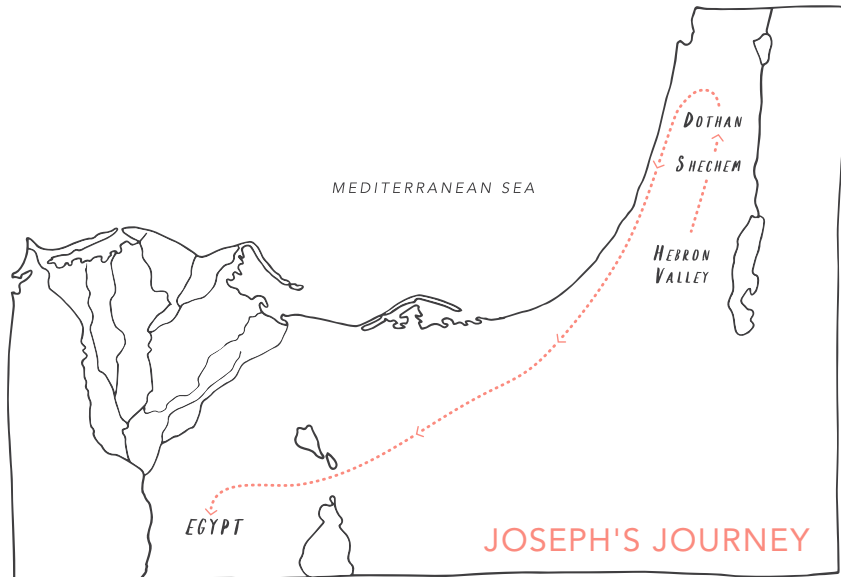
Genesis 37:12-28

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.



*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
what becomes of
his dreams!*

GENESIS 37:20



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

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

READ GENESIS 37:12-28.

Little did Jacob know that when he sent his beloved son Joseph on a journey to find his brothers, Jacob wouldn't see Joseph again for over twenty years. And Jacob 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?

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

Jewish tradition views this man as an angel.³ I don't think we can know for sure who he is, but in the words of K.A. Matthews,

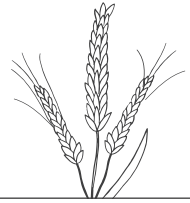
Whether the "man" is an angel or a human, the unseen hand of the Lord is apparent here.⁴

RESPOND: 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 the last sentence of Genesis 37:20 at the very end of our study. But, I want you to hang on to 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, it's a reminder to us that speaking up for



PERSONAL RESPONSE

Is there someone at school who is being bullied or pushed to the side who the Lord is asking you to protect, defend, or stand up for? Write that person's name below and what you feel prompted to do on his or her behalf.



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.

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.⁵ 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 below.)

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, then his brothers after deciding not to kill him, secured him a one-way ticket to Egypt by way of Ishmaelite traders.

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.

RESPOND: 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. Remember that, girls.

Note: *If the Lord is stirring in your heart to help fight against human trafficking, there are many organizations doing this important work. I trust and work alongside is Justice & Mercy International 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 reoccurring phrase, "The LORD was with Joseph." Joseph's entire story rests on these five words. We will see how God 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 puzzling about Jacob's sons trying to comfort him?

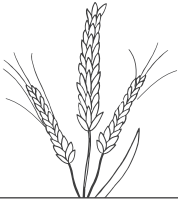
I'm trying to picture the scene: the brothers circled around their dad speaking comforting words to him, embracing him with loud cries, knowing all the while that his son wasn't dead, rather that he'd been sold at their very hands. Based on the brothers' fabricated evidence, Jacob drew his own conclusion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

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?

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 RESPONSE

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

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 what I'm hoping you'll see is 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 it 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 God Himself would give to the Israelites through Moses (Ex. 3:13-15). 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. We simply can't imagine God's reach.

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

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*

❑ *I Thessalonians 1:4-7*

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 mindset, even as believers: certain blessings can only come in the midst of our suffering. In Egypt, Joseph was rising in power and position. 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.**

RESPOND: Are you refusing God's blessings in the midst of your trial? Surrender your pain to the Lord and tell Him you're willing to receive His blessings even if they look different than what you're hoping for.

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. Keep asking the Holy Spirit to teach His Word to you, and thank Him for His presence on the journey.



I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

JOHN 13:34-35

GROUP DISCUSSION

- ✦ What part of Kelly's teaching really resonated with you? Why?
- ✦ Discuss the many ways favoritism damaged Jacob's family. How is it damaging to our relationships?
- ✦ How have you seen God create a path of blessing out of difficult circumstances? Explain.
- ✦ Have you ever felt like God has lost control of your story? Explain.
- ✦ How has God evidenced His presence in your life in your most difficult moments?
- ✦ Turn to 2 Corinthians 1:3-5. What is one of the purposes of our suffering (v. 4)?
- ✦ Have you ever been unhappy with the people God has assigned you to? Have you ever thought: I could do a great job for the Lord if He had just given me different family members, classmates, or a better church?
- ✦ God often uses suffering to make us fit for the dreams He has for us. The question is, are you willing to be obedient to the Lord during these seasons of testing?