

Small Group Guide: The Story of Joseph

Week 18 - Jacob's Final Words and Death (Genesis 49)

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: What's one piece of advice or blessing from a parent or grandparent that has shaped your life?

Key Sermon Recap (5 minutes)

Jacob, now 147 years old and nearing death, gathers his twelve sons to speak prophetic words over them. These aren't just blessings—they're honest assessments of character that would shape the tribes of Israel for generations. Through Jacob's words, we see that character shapes our future, but we also see God's incredible grace to redeem and use flawed people.

Central Question: Is it ever too late for heart change, or to right a wrong?

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Jacob's Transformation (15 minutes)

- Jacob's Identity Journey:** The sermon notes that Jacob finally accepts he is both "Jacob" (the flawed man/heel grabber) and "Israel" (who God called him to be).
 - How do you relate to this tension between who you are in your flesh and who God says you are?
 - What does it mean to you that "God looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7)?
- Spiritual Maturity:** Jacob spent 130 years in strife and his last 17 years in peace.
 - What do you think contributed to Jacob's peace in his final years?
 - How does suffering shape our relationship with God?

Section 2: Character Shapes Your Future (20 minutes)

- Reuben's Story:** Despite being the firstborn, Reuben lost his blessing due to instability and immoral choices.
 - Charles Spurgeon said, "A man may have great opportunities, and yet lose them. Uncontrolled passions may make him very little who otherwise might have been great."
 - What patterns or "uncontrolled passions" can rob us of our potential?
 - How do we break destructive patterns in our lives?
- Simeon and Levi:** Their fierce anger led to violence and murder, yet Levi's descendants became priests.

- What does Levi's redemption teach us about God's grace?
 - Can you think of a time when God redeemed something broken in your life or family?
5. **The Bigger Picture:** The sermon emphasized that bad character was an "unbroken pattern" for some tribes.
- What daily practices help you build godly character?
 - How can we hold each other accountable in our character development?

Section 3: God's Grace Can Rewrite the Story (20 minutes)

6. **Judah's Redemption:** Despite being "just as bad as Reuben, Simeon, and Levi," Judah's line became the line of blessing—ultimately leading to Jesus, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.
- Why do you think God chose Judah's line for the Messiah?
 - What does this teach us about God's grace versus our merit?
7. **The Scepter Promise:** "The scepter shall not depart from Judah...until tribute comes to him" (Genesis 49:10).
- How does God's faithfulness to this promise encourage you in your own life?
 - Where do you need to trust God's long-term faithfulness right now?

Section 4: Joseph's Faithfulness (15 minutes)

8. **Joseph's Secret:** The sermon says Joseph remained a "strong, fruitful bough" because of his "constant fellowship with God."
- What does "constant fellowship with God" look like practically?
 - How did Joseph's earlier suffering prepare him for his final role?
9. **Names of God:** Jacob uses multiple names for God: Mighty God, Shepherd, Stone of Israel, Almighty.
- Which name of God means the most to you in your current season? Why?
 - How has your understanding of God matured over the years?

Key Takeaways

1. **Character shapes your future** - Our choices and patterns have long-term consequences, affecting not just us but generations to come.
2. **God's grace can rewrite any story** - No matter how broken our past, God can redeem it for His purposes (see Judah and Levi).
3. **Spiritual maturity is a journey** - Jacob fought with God and himself for 130 years before finding peace. God is patient with our process.

4. **Constant fellowship with God sustains us** - Joseph remained faithful through hardship because he never let go of his relationship with God.
 5. **God is faithful to complete His work** - Philippians 1:6 reminds us that God finishes what He starts in us.
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to focus on this week:

1. **Character Audit:** Identify one "uncontrolled passion" or destructive pattern in your life. Share it with one trusted person and ask them to pray for you and check in weekly.
 2. **Fellowship Practice:** Commit to a daily 10-minute time of "constant fellowship" with God—prayer, Scripture reading, or simply sitting in His presence.
 3. **Grace Reflection:** Journal about one area of your past that you've considered unredeemable. Ask God to show you how He might redeem it or already has.
 4. **Blessing Others:** Like Jacob blessed his sons, write a blessing or encouraging word to someone in your family or small group, speaking truth about who God made them to be.
 5. **Study the Names of God:** Each day this week, meditate on one name of God that Jacob used (Mighty God, Shepherd, Stone, Almighty). Journal how that characteristic of God applies to your current circumstances.
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Closing Reflection (10 minutes)

Read together: Philippians 1:6 - "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it at the day of Jesus Christ."

Reflection Questions:

- What "good work" has God begun in you that you need to trust Him to complete?
- How does Jacob's story give you hope for your own journey?

Prayer Focus:

- Pray for character transformation in areas of weakness
 - Thank God for His patience and faithfulness
 - Ask for grace to see the bigger picture in current struggles
 - Pray for constant fellowship with God throughout the week
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For Next Week

Read Genesis 50 - The death and burial of Jacob, Joseph's final years, and the conclusion of Genesis. Consider: How does forgiveness shape a legacy?

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to group members who may be struggling with past mistakes or family dysfunction
- Emphasize grace and hope, not shame
- Allow space for honest sharing about character struggles
- Celebrate testimonies of God's redemption in people's lives
- Keep the discussion moving—don't let it get stuck on any one brother's story