

TAKEAWAY:

God's promises stand firm even when life feels uncertain.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

- What's a promise you're still waiting for God to fulfill? How does the waiting feel?

UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read Acts 7:1-16

- How did this sermon help you better understand this passage of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- What do you notice about how God initiated His relationship with Abraham?
- Abraham didn't seek God; God called Abraham. How does this change the way you think about your own faith journey?
- Abraham waited 25 years for Isaac. The patriarchs never saw the full promise fulfilled in their lifetimes. How do you maintain faith when God's timing feels painfully slow?

APPLICATION:

- Stephen recounts famine, family dysfunction, and slavery—yet God's plan continued. What current difficulty might actually be part of God's larger story in your life?
- How do we balance trusting God's promises with taking responsible action in our daily lives?

GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of our text from this week. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

"Already-and-Not-Yet": Between Jesus' 1st coming and his 2nd the Church lives in a state of tension described as "already-and-not-yet." In individual terms, Abraham exemplified this tension: God gave him "no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground" (Acts 7:5). The "already-and-not-yet" framework acknowledges that Christ has decisively won the victory and inaugurated His kingdom (the "already"), but the final eradication of sin, suffering, and death awaits Jesus' return (the "not yet").

- In light of Paul's charge in 1 Timothy 6:12, what does it practically look like to "fight the good fight of faith" when experiencing spiritual exhaustion, chronic suffering, or prolonged seasons of doubt?
- The writer of Hebrews emphasizes inheriting the promises through "faith and patience" (Hebrews 6:12). How are we to cultivate this kind of gritty patience without slipping into spiritual apathy or

passive resignation?

- Hebrews 10 tightly connects our ability to persevere to our commitment to not neglect gathering together. How does the physical community of faith serve as an anchor when the "not yet" feels overwhelming?
- How does the "already-but-not-yet" framework change our metric for spiritual success, shifting it from immediate comfort and victory to long-term endurance and faithfulness?

Providence and Human Malice: Stephen critically notes that "the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him" (Acts 7:9). Consider how God's overarching promises remain entirely secure even when they are actively assaulted by the sin, betrayal, or severe dysfunction of other people.

- How does the profound pivot in the phrase "But God was with him" completely reframe the severe trauma of Joseph being sold by his own brothers?
- Why is it exceptionally difficult to trust God's promises when our suffering is caused directly by the malicious, intentional actions of others, particularly family members?
- In what ways does God mysteriously use the evil intentions of human beings as the exact mechanism to ultimately fulfill His redemptive promises?
- How can meditating on God's absolute sovereignty over human dysfunction help believers practice genuine forgiveness toward those who have deeply betrayed them?
- What current relational tension or systemic dysfunction in your life might God be actively using to prepare you for a future, unseen purpose?

QUOTES:

- "Scripture frequently sums up a man's life in a single sentence. Here is the biography of Joseph sketched by inspiration—'God was with him,' so Stephen testified in his famous speech recorded in Acts 7:9." Charles Spurgeon
- "The Kingdom of God is a present reality, and yet it is a future blessing. It is an inner spiritual redemptive blessing which can be experienced now; but it will have to do with the government of the nations of the world... when Christ returns." George E. Ladd
- "You cannot live the Christian life without fighting. The 'good fight of faith' means constantly reminding yourself of what is already true of you in Christ when everything around you, and even your own heart, screams the opposite." Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- "Endurance is the characteristic mark of the true believer, who holds fast to the unseen reality of God's promises despite the visible contradictions of the present." F. F. Bruce
- "The Christian's life is essentially a life of the world to come, already planted in this world. We are men and women of the future, who have brought the future into the present." Geerhardus Vos
- "Sanctification is the process of being increasingly conformed to the image of the resurrected Christ. It is a present possession of the future reality, an anticipatory sharing in the resurrection life." Richard Gaffin

Group Activity: (3x5 Index Cards may be helpful)

- Write down one promise from Scripture that speaks to your current situation. Post it somewhere visible and commit to reading it daily this week, asking God to strengthen your trust in His timing and providence.

Group Prayer: Open up your time for each member who would like to pray, pray for the person on their left.

