



CWR/PTM

CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

## GENESIS

Week 4

## Don't Mess With Dinah!

Genesis 34:1-31

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Do you know any families full of boys? Any with only one sister? How is she treated?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. What did Shechem's actions toward Dinah show about him? Was he: (a) sexually impulsive (b) spoiled by his dad, (c) socially outrageous, (d) politically naive, or (e) sensitive and caring?
2. By his willingness to pay anything to have Dinah as his wife, was Shechem doing the right thing? What about the two fathers? What's missing here?
3. How was Shechem's wrong avenged? Why? With what consequences (see 34:25-29)?
4. How should it have been handled? (a) forgive and forget, (b) God alone takes revenge, (c) what Dinah's brothers did was just, (d) insist on conditions Shechem could not possibly meet.
5. What is the point of this gruesome story? (a) boys will be boys; (b) family honor is preeminent; (c) two wrongs don't make a right; (d) lust, greed and revenge are never justified; (e) intermarriage with Canaanites had to be stopped at all costs.
6. Who do you most sympathize with? (a) Dinah, (b) Jacob, (c) Shechem, (d) Dinah's brothers, (e) Hamor, (f) men of the city.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. For whom or what cause are you most zealous? Are you willing to do anything for him, her or it? Why or why not?
2. When is it right to be indignant and take aggressive action?

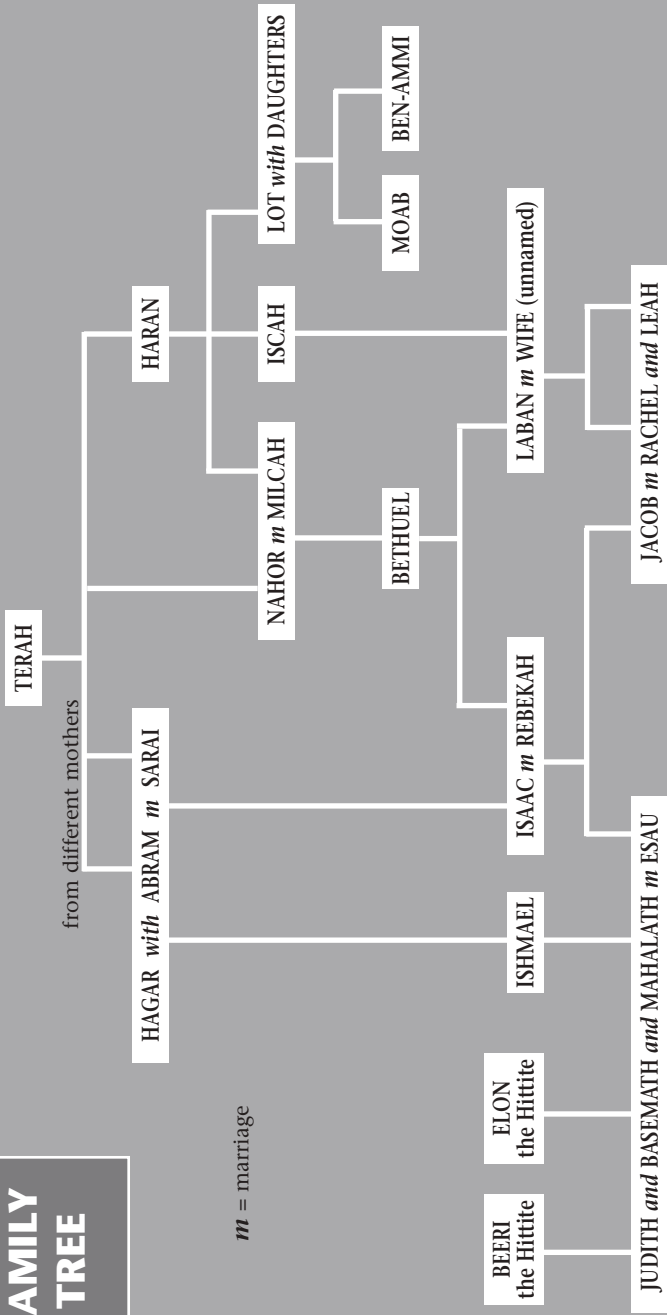
**WINDOW**  
on the Word

On the **bride-price** (24:12), see 24:53 and related note on day 18. On **intermarriage** with the Canaanites (34:8), see 24:1-6.

## KEY WOMEN IN THE GENESIS STORY

NAME	SCRIPTURES	SUMMARY
Eve	2:18–4:26	First woman and wife of Adam. Tempted by Satan to eat forbidden fruit. Expelled from Eden with Adam.
Sarai/Sarah	11:29–23:2	Wife of Abram/Abraham. Gave birth to Isaac at the age of 91, as promised by God.
Hagar	16:1–21:21	Sarah's Egyptian slave and mother of Ishmael. Sent away from Abraham's household. Rescued by God.
Lot's Daughters	19:6–38	Husbands died in Sodom. Mothers of Ammon and Moab, by incestuous union with Lot.
Rebekah	24:15–27:46	Laban's sister, Isaac's wife. Mother of Esau and Jacob. Helped Jacob capture a blessing from Isaac.
Rachel and Leah	29:6–35:20	Daughters of Laban and wives of Jacob. Competed for his affection and for numbers of children.
Dinah	34:1-31	Apparently, only daughter of Jacob among his 12 sons, who avenged her rape by Shechem the Canaanite.
Tamar	38:1-30	Widow of Judah's son. Posed as a prostitute to obtain support from her father-in-law.
Potiphar's Wife	39:7-20	Spouse of Joseph's Egyptian master. Falsely accused Joseph of attempted rape.

# JACOB'S FAMILY TREE



# Life Passages: Birth, Death, Moving On

DAY 23

Genesis 35:1–36:43

Has your family recently experienced a life passage such as birth, death or career move?

1. Two big moves, three name changes, one covenant pronouncement, one late birth, one outrageous sin and three deaths mark life passages or transitions for Jacob and Esau. Which one signals the climax in the Isaac-Jacob section of Genesis (ch. 25-36)?
2. Why must Jacob's clan clean house before their journey (35:1-4)?
3. What significance do you see in the name changes or differences (35:6-7; 35:9 with 32:28; 35:18)?
4. What joy and sorrow do you see in the deaths of Deborah, Rachel and Isaac (35:8, 16-20, 27-29)?
5. Esau's wives are mentioned in 26:34-35; 28:8-9 and 36:2-3; his children in 36:1-8 and expanded upon in 36:9-43. With a huge entourage that the land could not support, what seemed most important to Esau? (a) women, (b) children, (c) possessions, (d) career, (e) land for himself, (f) space for other clans, (g) room for God. What seemed least important? By comparison, what seemed most important to Jacob?

1. Bethel was where God talked to Jacob and Hebron was a benchmark experience for Abraham (35:27; see 13:18; 23:2, 17-20). Do you have a "Bethel" or "Hebron"?
2. How do your priorities (wealth, career, children, spouse) compare to Jacob's and Esau's?
3. What does Genesis 35-36 teach you about life passages?

*In 35:6, 19, 27; 36:31, some **place names** were updated after Moses' time. The name of a later Israelite king is also mentioned. This editorial updating does not disprove Mosaic authorship of Genesis, but does mean others edited the text centuries later. **Reuben's sin** (35:22) will eventually cost this firstborn son his double portion of the inheritance from Israel and his place of leadership among the tribes.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## The Bane and Blessing of Playing Favorites

Genesis 37:1-36

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Is there a member of your family who is favored above the others? How does that make you feel?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. Why were Joseph's brothers so annoyed with him?
2. What dreams did Joseph have? Was he wise to share them with his family?
3. What did these dreams reveal about Joseph's future? (a) he'll be a ruler; (b) he'll be a farmer; (c) he'll reign over his family; (d) he'll control the sun, moon and stars.
4. How did the conspiracy against Joseph unfold? What plot twists surprised even the conspirators? Can you see God working, by his grace, to bring good out of this miserable situation?
5. Which brothers took a stand and why?
6. At what point, if at all, do you suppose they regretted their vengeful actions?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

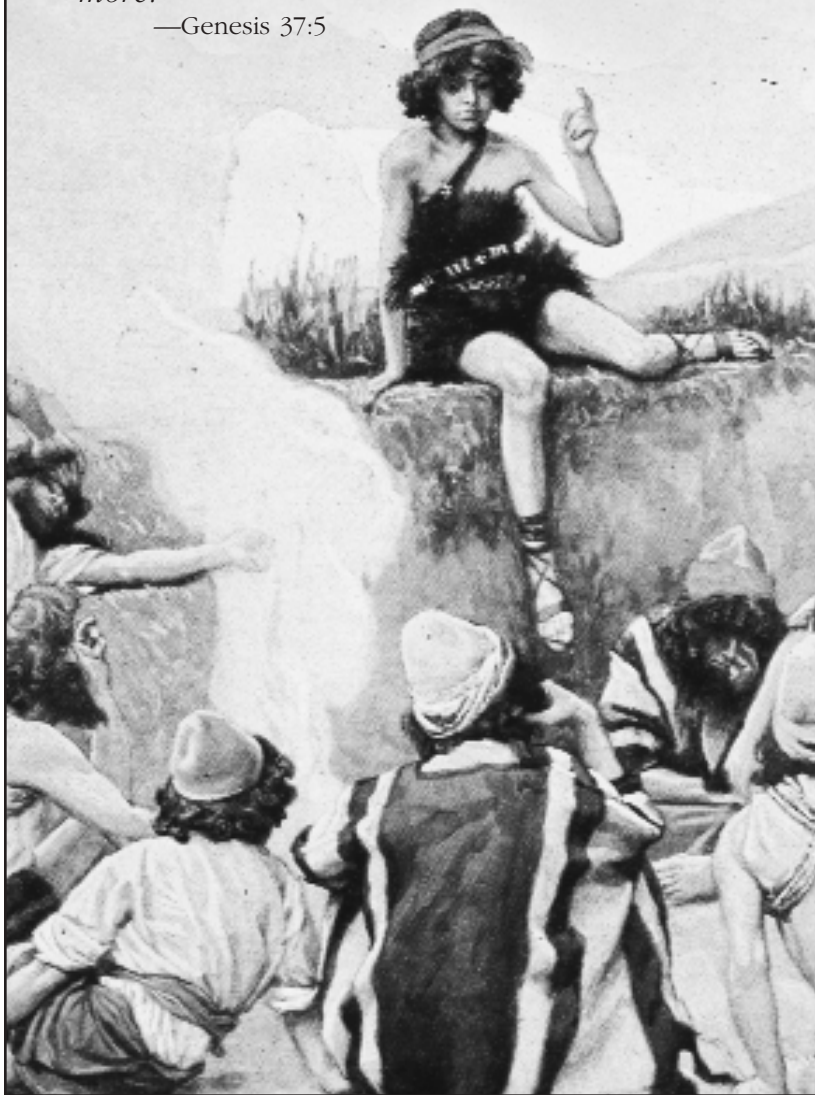
1. Who do you most identify with? (a) Joseph—a favorite child and possible leader, (b) a jealous family member, (c) a parent with a favorite child.
2. Do you believe in treating family members *equally* or *fairly*? What's the difference? What problems or opportunities does that create or avoid?
3. What lessons can we learn about God's grace and mercy from this account?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

The **account** of Jacob-Joseph (37:2) is the tenth main literary section and the climactic finale in the Genesis narrative (see note on day 2 regarding Ge 2:4). That Joseph wears a **robe** (37:3, 23-24) was not unique, as everyone had a robe or cloak. This garment served various purposes: to keep warm, to bundle up belongings, to wrap babies, as security for a loan or pledge. To **tear one's clothes** (vs. 29, 34) was a sign of mourning.

*“Joseph had a  
dream and when  
he told it to his  
brothers, they  
bated him all the  
more.”*

—Genesis 37:5



Artwork by James Tissot

## Wickedness vs. Righteousness

---

Genesis 38:1–39:23

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Has your family experienced wickedness—either as a victim or perpetrator? Do you fear that some form of evil might hurt your family?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. Do these two chapters illustrate the moral superiority of Joseph and the moral inferiority of Judah? What do these chapters tell us about God's grace?
2. Why didn't Onan fulfill his duty to his widowed sister-in-law?
3. Though she prostituted herself, why was Tamar considered "more righteous" than Judah?
4. What did wickedness win in the Tamar-Onan-Judah case? (a) death, (b) trouble, (c) displeasure, (d) embarrassment, (e) confession.
5. What did wickedness win in the case of the Joseph, Potiphar and Potiphar's wife?
6. Did Joseph's moral behavior win him anything, besides jail?
7. How did Joseph resist temptation? What help did God provide?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Staying true to God has its own reward, but Joseph also enjoyed success in whatever he did. If given that kind of success, what would you do?
2. Have you been accused of something you didn't do? Did you stay true to God throughout the ordeal?
3. Has God "remembered" you in "prison"? Has he ever delivered you from a spiritual or religious prison?

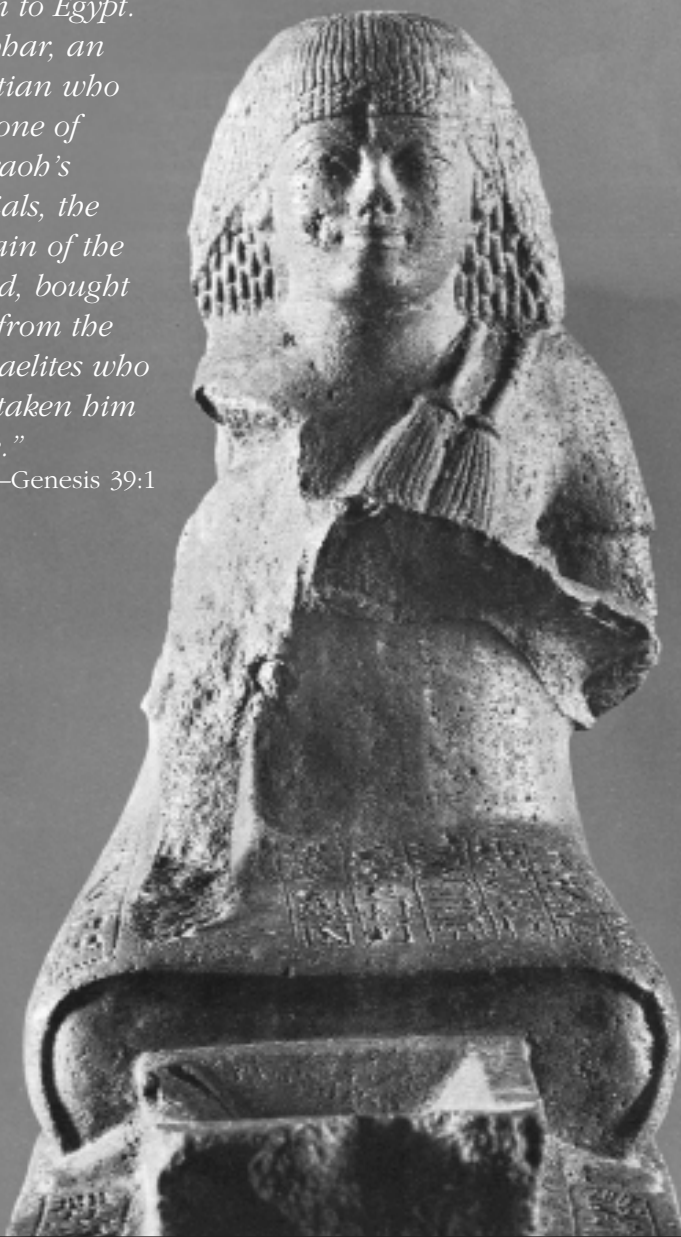
**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*This story applies the law of the **levirate marriage** (levir is Latin for "brother-in-law"). If a married man died without a son, his brother was required to marry the widow. The firstborn son from that union would then carry on the name and inheritance of his dead uncle. This is explained in Deuteronomy 25:5-10 and illustrated elsewhere (Ru 3:12; 4:5-6; Mt 22:24).*

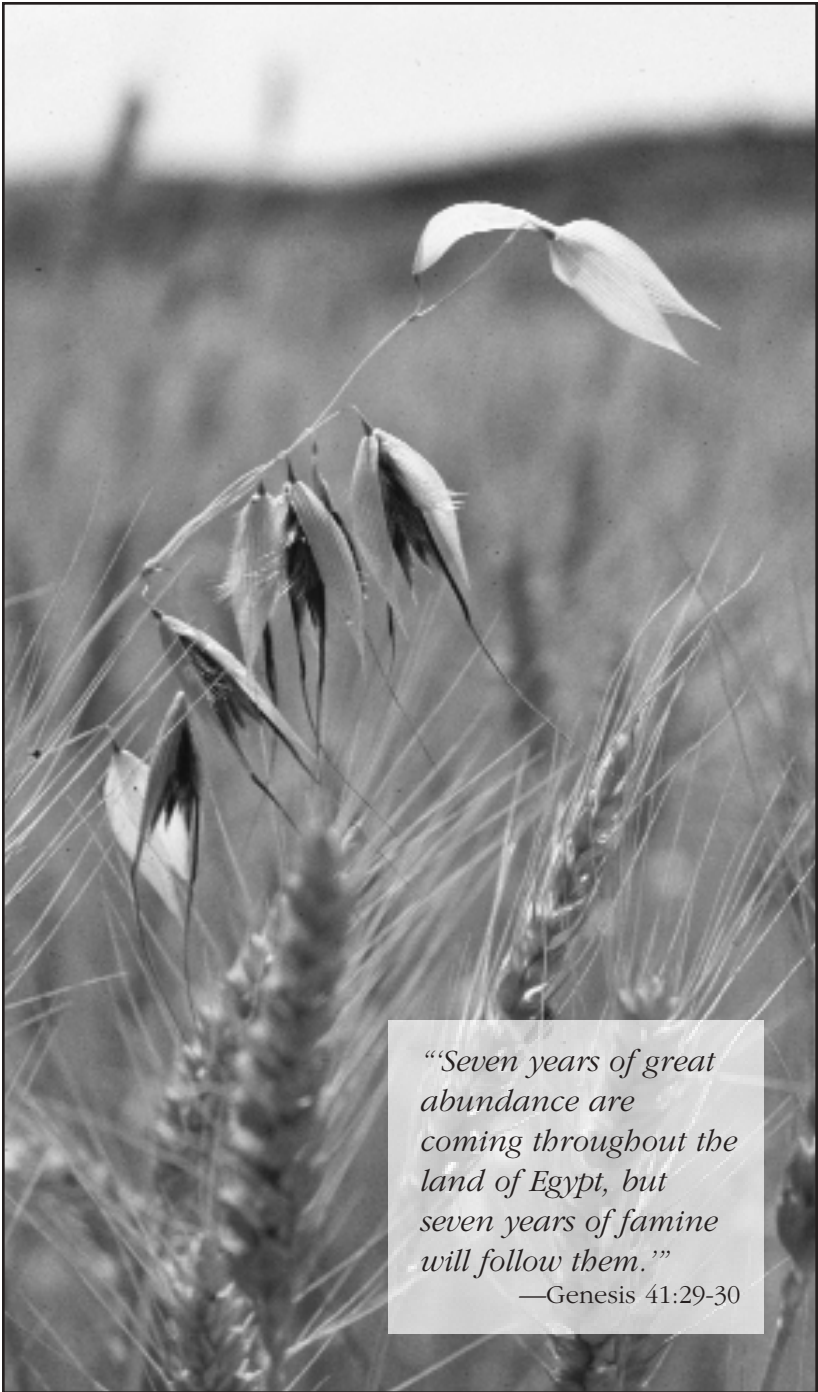


*“Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there.”*

—Genesis 39:1



Statuette of a royal Egyptian attendant from the 18th Dynasty, 14th century B.C.



*“Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them.”*

—Genesis 41:29-30

# Dream: How Now, Fat Cow?

DAY 26

Genesis 40:1–41:57

Do you have recurring dreams? Do you believe they hold any meaning—or are they simply dreams?

1. What did the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker mean?
2. Why was Joseph able to interpret the dreams, accurately and fearlessly?
3. How could the cupbearer forget the one who saved his life (40:23; 41:9-13)?
4. Who did God warn of the famine? How did God convey this warning? What was Joseph's role in this dream-like rescue mission?
5. Was there any problem with Joseph taking a foreign name and a foreign wife (41:45)? Joseph had two sons by her. Why did he name them as he did (41:50-53)?
6. What does this story say about God's use of dreams? About bad things happening to good people? About success? About God's grace? About God's control of all events, even the "fat" and "lean" times? About giving credit to God?

1. Do you have more of a problem with success or with failure? What circumstance (up or down) is making it hard for you to trust God?

2. What does Joseph's story tell you about trusting God for all your needs—wherever, whenever?

**Seven years of famine** (41:27)... in all the world (41:57). That is, the severity of the famine was felt in all the known world from the writer's perspective (see 47:13-15). Egypt rarely experienced a famine, unlike its neighbors (see 12:10), because the Nile annually overflowed its banks, irrigating the land.

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

## Joseph Lords It Over His Brothers

Genesis 42:1–43:34

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Did you play king-of-the-hill games as a kid, and win? Or were you mostly left out or picked on, as low person on the totem pole?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

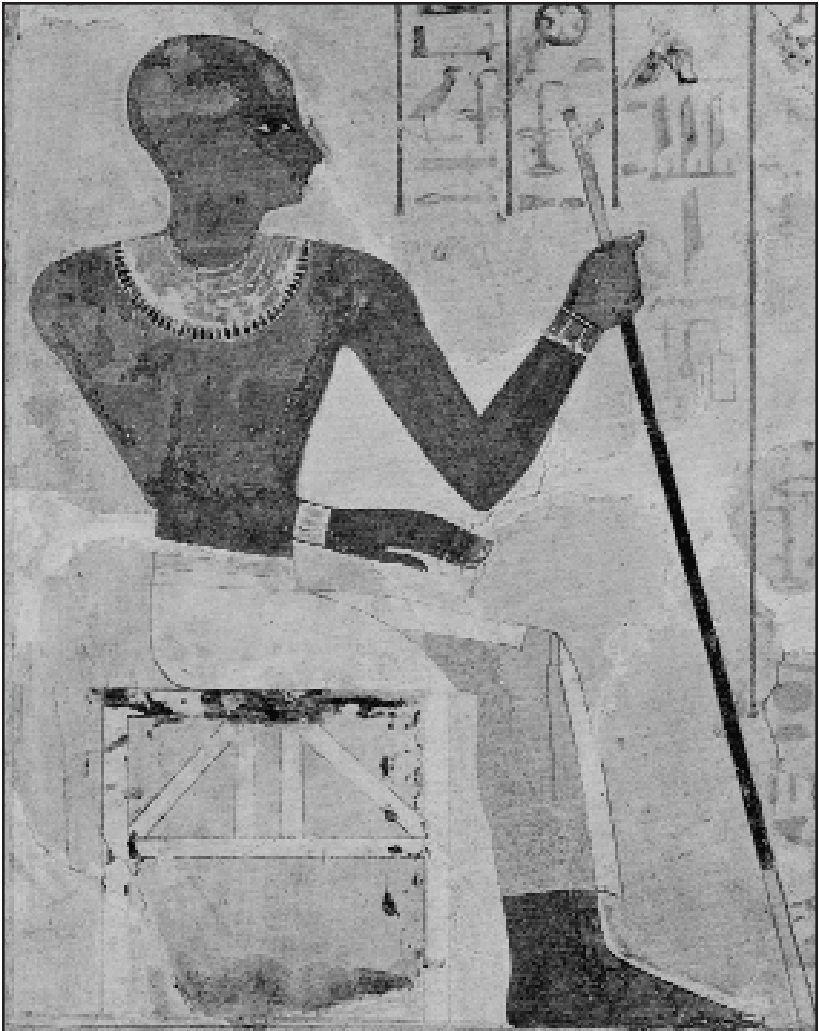
1. Joseph had the power and wealth to send someone to Canaan to search for his family. Why didn't he do it? Should a victim initiate reconciliation?
2. Why did Joseph test his brothers' honesty, and keep Simeon with him? (a) as revenge, (b) ransom, (c) ruthlessness, (d) reckless disregard, (e) to rule or play God.
3. Sketch an emotional roller coaster that Joseph was riding—which doesn't end for another two chapters. What ups and downs do you sense so far (from ch. 37-43)? When did Joseph peak? When did he hit bottom?
4. In Joseph's grief, do you sense tears of joy, loss, regret or guilt?
5. Joseph had his brothers pushing and pulling each other in an emotional tug of war. What was at stake here? Who stood to lose more—Joseph, Simeon, Reuben, Judah, Benjamin or Jacob (42:22-24, 36-38; 43:8-9, 11-14)? Who stood to gain most?
6. Why was Israel (Jacob) particularly vulnerable to loss? Then why risk sending Benjamin to Egypt?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Have you ever questioned the honesty of a family member? Did you ever have to prove your own honesty to another family member?
2. What part of their (Joseph's, Jacob's or the brothers') emotional roller coaster do you identify with and why?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Joseph could recognize his brothers, but not vice versa, because in 20 years Joseph had **changed** considerably in appearance (shaving, wearing Egyptian clothing) and speech (using an interpreter). He also enjoyed an unexpected position of authority. By contrast, his brothers were already adults when Joseph left them and their habits as Hebrews remained largely unchanged.*



*“The man who is lord  
over the land spoke  
harshly to us and treated  
us as though we were  
spying on the land.”*

—Genesis 42:30

## Caught with the Goods

---

Genesis 44:1–45:28

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Have you ever got caught with your “hand in the cookie jar”? What excuse did you use or did you tell the truth? Did your credibility suffer as a result? What was your punishment, if any?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** Why did Joseph put his silver cup in Benjamin’s sack? What could have happened to anyone caught with the goods?

**2.** What caused Joseph to finally let down his guard? (a) compassion for brothers, (b) conviction of God’s truth, (c) loss of self-control, (d) confession was good for the soul, (e) he was convinced that his brothers had changed.

**3.** To what lengths did Joseph go to reconcile his family? (a) broadcast the news, (b) big gifts, (c) best land, (d) new wardrobe, (e) full confession. Why go to such trouble?

**4.** Joseph redeemed the very ones who despised and rejected him. What does this tell us about our relationship with our Lord and Savior?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** Is something depressing you? Would it help to know the end of your story from the beginning? Might God have a helpful purpose by keeping some things from you, only to be revealed in the end?

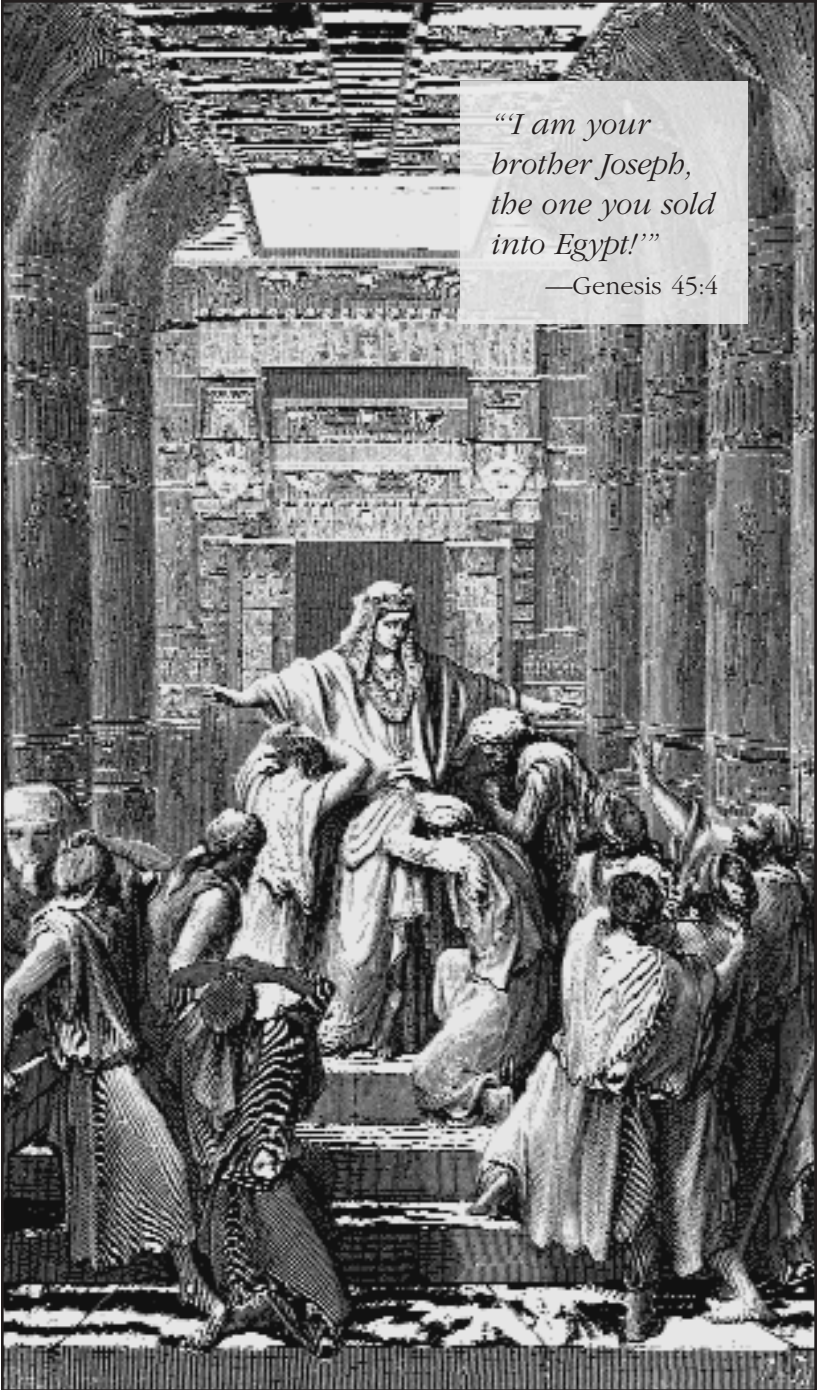
**2.** Is your family divided? What would it take to get you back together?

**3.** What does this story of Joseph and his brothers tell you about God’s mercy and grace?



*“I am your  
brother Joseph,  
the one you sold  
into Egypt!”*

—Genesis 45:4



Artwork by Gustav Doré

## From Fear to Favor, Famine to Fruitfulness

Genesis 46:1–47:31

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

What one journey would you like to take before you die?

1. What did Israel most fear as his life came to a close? What did God again promise that would take away his fears (46:3-4; compare 12:2; 15:16; 26:24; 28:15)?
2. Looking ahead (47:27-31; 49:29-33), how was this promise fulfilled?
3. Why were shepherds so detestable to Egyptians, and how did that work to Israel's advantage (46:31-47:6)?
4. What do you think was hardest for the hungry people to give up? (a) money, (b) animals, (c) land, (d) 20% of the crop, (e) faith.
5. How did the people get into this financial mess? (a) poor planning, (b) bad drought, (c) foolish spending, (d) Joseph's fault, (e) act of God.
6. What was Joseph like in this crisis? (a) smart, (b) greedy, (c) unfair, (d) helpful, (e) kind.
7. What principles from Joseph's administration seemed to work in tough times? (a) social security, (b) taxes with exemptions, (c) centralized economy, (d) savings plan, (e) pay as you go, (f) avoiding debt.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. What would be hardest for you to give up if you had to tighten your belt to make ends meet?
2. What fears do you have that you can turn over to God?
3. Compared to Joseph, what character traits does a crisis bring out in you? Which of Joseph's administrative principles could you apply in tough times? How can you rest in Christ in spite of and in the midst of tough times?

**WINDOW**  
on--- the Word

*Various lists record 66, 70 or 75 named persons who made this **journey from Beersheba** (in Canaan) to Goshen, Egypt (see 46:15, 18, 22, 25-27; Ac 7:14; also Nu 26). Consult a good study Bible, such as the NIV Study Bible, for an explanation of these differences.*



# The Blessing: What Goes Around Comes Around

DAY 30

Genesis 48:1–50:26

Are there any interesting traits that have been passed down in your family? What character quality would you like to pass along to your kids?

1. How did Jacob know what to say about his grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim (48:1-22) and about his 12 sons (49:2-27)?
2. Joseph argued with Jacob about who would be greater or more favored. Why? What was ironic about that, given the history of the patriarchs?
3. In the Blessing of Jacob, what trait or prediction stands out about each son?
4. Which sons might have balked at being blessed or cursed by Jacob—with past sins coming back to haunt them?
5. What predictions about Judah (49:8-12) made his future seem more special than the others?
6. In the end, how did Joseph honor his father on earth (49:29-33)? His Father in heaven (50:19-20)?

1. Of Jacob's 12 sons, which one would you want to be? Not want to be? Why?
2. What's the difference between blessing your children, as Jacob did, and planning or manipulating their futures?
3. How would you feel if someone promised a family member they would be "greater" than you?
4. What impresses you about the way Joseph treated his father? His brothers? How can God help you to be like Joseph in reconciling your family relationships?

*The **Blessing of Jacob** (49:2-27) not only applied to his 12 sons, but also to the tribes who would descend from them. For example, Jesus the Messiah, called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5; also Mt 1:2, 17; Lk 3:23, 33), was the greatest descendant and obvious fulfillment of Jacob's prophecy to Judah (49:8-12). The vivid imagery here must be interpreted as the poetic genre and symbolic language that it is—full of similes, metaphors, even word puns on the sons' names. Consult a good study Bible for help with specifics.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word