A Summary of the Bible

In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God.

Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel’s behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God’s people—like all of us—failed to rightly reflect the glory of God.

Then, in the fullness of time, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead.

Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ’s work to the world. Empowered by God’s Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation.

The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God’s judgment and live joyfully in God’s presence for all eternity. God’s message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe with your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved.
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The Books of Genesis and Exodus are meant to be read together, providing an important clue for our approach to the rest of Scripture. The story begins in Genesis and unfolds with breathtaking speed, but then the pace slows as the rest of the book tells us the story of four generations of the one family through which God promised to bring blessing to the world.

As Genesis winds down, we encounter Joseph, one of Abraham’s great grandsons, and see that God’s promises are not always easy for His people. But through Joseph’s difficulties, we encounter the vital concept of redemption. His life was one of setbacks, frustration, and disappointment. But all the while, we see that God was at work through Joseph’s adversity, not despite it. God brought about redemption for Joseph and his family: God is always bringing glory to Himself and good to His people through their hardships, even by overriding their sins.

Then as we move from Genesis to Exodus, we pass over nearly four hundred years to a time when God’s people are enslaved. The stage is set for an even greater display of God’s desire and ability to redeem His people. When they cry out to God for deliverance from their slavery in Egypt, He provides a rescuer in Moses to free His people and to provide for them.

God’s deliverance of Joseph and the nation of Israel were the early stages of a beautiful crescendo of God’s plan to redeem His people that culminated in Christ Jesus. In Him we have experienced redemption from the slavery of sin and death. As we study these sessions, let us pray that the Holy Spirit stirs our hearts anew so that we are captivated by the love, grace, and mercy of God made known to us in our redemption through Christ so we can share Him with others.
Matt Chandler (unit 4, sessions 4-6; unit 5, session 1) is a Lead Pastor at The Village Church, president of Acts 29, and author of several books, including *Take Heart: Christian Courage in the Age of Unbelief*. Matt and his wife, Lauren, have three children: Audrey, Reid and Norah.

Jennifer Grisham (unit 6, sessions 1-2) serves as managing editor and administrator at Doxology & Theology. She’s a graduate of Baylor University and is currently pursuing a masters degree at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Andrew Hall (unit 6, session 3) is the Lead Pastor of Community Bible Church, located in Ilderton, Ontario, Canada. He is a graduate from Southern Seminary. He and his wife, Melanie, have four children: Noelle, Ava, Calvin, and Brita.

Pat Hood (unit 5, sessions 2-3) is the Senior Pastor at LifePoint Church in Tennessee. He and his wife, Amy, have five children. Pat is the author of *The Sending Church*, which challenges every church to send and every Christian to live sent.

Sung Jin Park (Christmas session) and his wife, Alice, have three kids. He is Associate Professor of Biblical Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and earned a PhD from Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion.

David Roark (unit 4, sessions 4-6; unit 5, session 1) is the Communications and Resources Director at The Village Church and writes on faith and culture in notable publications. He and his wife, Taylor, have two daughters: Leigh and Lainey.

Robert Smith Jr. (unit 4, sessions 1-3), PhD, is the Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School. He is the author of *Doctrine That Dances* and *The Oasis of God*. He is married to Wanda Taylor-Smith (PhD), and they have four adult children with one in heaven.
Unit 4, Session 1

God Redeems Betrayal

Summary and Goal
In this session, we will see that Jacob’s favoritism did not stop with his love for Rachel over Leah; he also loved Joseph more than his other sons. And once again, we will see that favoritism never ends well for anyone. However, we will also see that God continued His plan to use this family shattered by sin and strife. God is willing and able to redeem His people from the most adverse situations, even those His people create for themselves. The life of Joseph is an example of God’s pattern of redemptive reversal, where He permits what appears to be detrimental or destructive and reverses it to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

Session Outline
1. Favoritism leads to hatred and strife (Gen. 37:3-8).
2. Jealousy leads to an opportunity for sin (Gen. 37:18-22).

Session in a Sentence
Family strife can shatter a family, but God works even through the sinful choices of humanity to bring about good.

Christ Connection
Joseph was his father’s beloved son who was betrayed by his own brothers and sold into slavery. Jesus is the Father’s beloved Son who was betrayed by His own and died on the cross to rescue us from our sin.

Missional Application
Because we are fully accepted by the Father in Christ, we fight selfishness and sin to live in a way that brings honor and praise to God’s Son and guides others to become part of God’s family.
Group Time

Introduction

PACK ITEM 1: OUT OF EGYPT: Use this outline poster for the volume to show that the next three sessions dealing with the life of Joseph demonstrate God’s power to redeem His people even through difficult circumstances and evil choices.

SAY: Memories are powerful. Perhaps triggered by a sight, sound, or smell, they are often pleasant, but sometimes memories evoke deep pain, heartache, and sorrow. Many of us carry such scars for years, sometimes for the rest of our lives.

INTERACT: Ask group members to share briefly some of their answers to the following questions on page 11 in their Daily Discipleship Guide (DDG).

What memories from your childhood evoke strong emotions? How do these memories and emotions affect you even today? (be prepared to give answers of your own to jump-start the conversation)

READ the following paragraph in the DDG (p. 11).

Søren Kierkegaard, a nineteenth-century Christian philosopher, said, “Life must be understood backwards … it must be lived—fowards.”! Time offers us a better perspective, a clearer lens, from which to understand what we experience today, whether good or bad. But while tomorrow can give us the gift of understanding, it cannot give us the gift of healing; that only comes from God.

SUMMARIZE: In this session, we will see that God continued His plan to use the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though shattered by sin and strife. God is willing and able to redeem His people from the most adverse situations, even those His people create for themselves. The life of Joseph is an example of God’s pattern of redemptive reversal, where He permits what appears to be detrimental or destructive and reverses it to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

For additional teaching options and other resources, please visit www.GospelProject.com/additional-resources.
Point 1: Favoritism leads to hatred and strife (Gen. 37:3-8).

SAY: Favoritism. The word produces such great joy and great sorrow. For the favored, the word prompts memories of advantages and perks: special gifts from a parent; special treatment from a teacher; special outings with a friend. But for those not favored, its fruit is jealousy, anger, bitterness, and heartache.

EXPLAIN: Recall from previous sessions that Jacob had played favorites with his wives. He favored Rachel over Leah. As Genesis 37 opens, we now read of Jacob playing favorites with his sons, favoring Joseph over his brothers. Joseph seemed to bask in his favored position, oblivious to the resentment festering in his brothers.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Genesis 37:3-8 (DDG p. 12).

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than his other sons because Joseph was a son born to him in his old age, and he made a robe of many colors for him. 4 When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not bring themselves to speak peaceably to him.

5 Then Joseph had a dream. When he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. 6 He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had: 7 There we were, binding sheaves of grain in the field. Suddenly my sheaf stood up, and your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf.”

8 “Are you really going to reign over us?” his brothers asked him. “Are you really going to rule us?” So they hated him even more because of his dream and what he had said.

EXPLAIN: Jacob’s favoritism toward Joseph strained the relationships within his family.

- The multi-colored robe was a symbol of Jacob’s special love for Joseph for all to see. It may have signified Jacob’s choice of Joseph—the firstborn son of his beloved wife, Rachel—to lead the family after him, being the firstborn who really counted in his mind. Jacob’s placing Joseph in the role of a supervisor over his brothers as they shepherded the flocks supports this possibility (see Gen. 37:12-17).

- Joseph’s brothers hated him and hated him more because of Joseph’s dream about their sheaves of grain bowing to his. The meaning of the dream was not lost on the brothers: they would one day bow to Joseph. His brothers did not respond with great joy at the thought that he was a seer in their midst.

- Joseph recounted a second dream in Genesis 37:9-11, in which the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed to him. This time, Jacob himself rebuked Joseph for implying that the family would bow to him. The brothers were jealous of Joseph, but Jacob continued to ponder what the dream could mean.

READ the following paragraph in the DDG (p. 12).

Favoritism, hatred, and strife plagued Abraham’s family for generations. Isaac favored Esau while Rebekah favored Jacob. Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. Jacob favored Joseph, the firstborn son God gave his beloved Rachel. Because of favoritism, Jacob struggled to have peace in his family.
INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

How have you seen favoritism harm you or others at home, at work, or in some other setting? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

EXPLAIN: The tendency to play favorites can lead us to try to help God accomplish His plans through our methods, but God does not need our interference. Favoritism can never be justified because God does not show favoritism (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph 6:9). When we sin through favoritism, on any level, we perpetuate hatred and strife instead of love and peace. We must beware—favoritism never advances the gospel; it can only hinder it.

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 12). Emphasize that favoritism has no place in families because they should reflect the character of God.

Family Relationships: God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Essential Doctrine “Family Relationships”: God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards (Heb. 13:4), and the means for procreation of the human race. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God’s image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation (Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Pet. 3:1-7). Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God’s pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth (Deut. 6:4-9). Children are to honor and obey their parents (Eph. 6:1-3).
Point 2: Jealousy leads to an opportunity for sin (Gen. 37:18-22).

**SAY:** At some point after Joseph shared his dreams with his family, his brothers went into the fields with their father’s flocks. Jacob then sent Joseph to his other sons so he could report back on them. But when his brothers saw Joseph in the distance, they recognized an opportunity to rid themselves of the one they hated so much.

**READ** Genesis 37:18-22 (DDG p. 13).

18 They saw him in the distance, and before he had reached them, they plotted to kill him. 19 They said to one another, “Oh, look, here comes that dream expert! 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!”
20 When Reuben heard this, he tried to save him from them. He said, “Let’s not take his life.” 21 Reuben also said to them, “Don’t shed blood. Throw him into this pit in the wilderness, but don’t lay a hand on him”—intending to rescue him from them and return him to his father.

**EXPLAIN:** Referring to the following paragraph in the DDG (p. 13), show how jealousy and hatred led Joseph’s brothers to consider the sin of murder.

Joseph’s brothers were blinded by jealousy and hatred, and Jacob was blind to just how deep their jealousy went. Sending Joseph to report on them, the doting father had given his vengeful sons the opportunity they needed to dispense with their “beloved” brother, and they devised a plan to murder him. As King Solomon would later warn, “Fury is cruel, and anger a flood, but who can withstand jealousy?” (Prov. 27:4). Joseph and Jacob would soon see the wisdom of that proverb.

**Commentary:** Joseph’s brothers had shown a tendency toward violence before in Genesis 34, where Simeon and Levi took vengeance on an entire city for the rape of their sister. In their deceit and hatred, they devised a plan and proceeded to kill every male in the city, and then the rest of the brothers joined in and plundered the city of all its people and possessions.

**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.

❓ Why can jealousy be more harmful than anger or fury, as Solomon warned? (jealousy can easily hide in the shadows of one’s heart; jealousy often arises with respect to a friend or family member, someone close to you; jealousy cannot be satisfied without the object being taken away from someone else and claimed for yourself)
READ the following paragraph in the DDG (p. 13).

The sin of jealousy led each of the brothers to view Joseph not as a brother or a person but as an obstacle. Even Reuben’s seemingly heroic actions fell short of God’s expectations for His people. As believers, God has called us not to jealousy and fear but to love as we confront sin in our lives and in our culture. We are to know the truth, live according to the truth of God’s Word, and be bold as we stand for truth in this world.

EXPLAIN the shortfall of Reuben’s actions and how God’s Word leads us in a different, more faithful path.

- Reuben offered a compromise to his brothers to save face as he veiled the truth of his plan—he advocated throwing Joseph in a pit so he could later come and rescue him. But consider what Reuben failed to say and do, what he should have said and done. Reuben should have rebuked his brothers. He should have called on them to repent of their sin of jealousy and hatred and for even considering murdering their brother. He should have demanded that they receive Joseph with open arms rather than an open pit.

- Unlike Reuben, we are to be bold as we stand for truth, even if we are outnumbered, even if our lonely voice crying out is mocked and rejected. We are to declare clearly and emphatically what is right and what is wrong. It is our duty to honor the banner of Christ above all else, and He came in truth and grace (John 1:14,17), so we honor Him by speaking the truth boldly and in love.

- We are emboldened for the truth as we live according to God’s Word, trusting in His revealed sovereignty and goodness in the face of sin and evil. This teaches us that He is capable of redemptive reversal today. In other words, He is able to take what is meant for evil and use it for good. But perhaps too few of us are feeding our souls on God’s Word to stand for truth—we don’t know it, or if we do, we don’t love it. The growing biblical illiteracy in our homes and churches pushes God’s people to the sidelines of our culture as we stand by and watch sins like favoritism and jealousy wreak havoc in our society, our churches, and our families.

Statistics: The majority of Americans value the Bible; almost ninety percent of American households own at least one Bible, including nearly seventy percent of non-Christian homes. But only one in seven adults reads the Bible daily.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question, which will direct their minds to the importance of God’s Word in understanding and confronting sin.

How might spending more time in God’s Word motivate us to stand against sin and for the gospel in our culture? (we would be reminded again and again of the destructive effects of sin; regular time in God’s Word helps to shape our worldview so we recognize sin when we see it and know the gospel is the solution for it; we would see the grace and kindness of God that draws us and the world to repentance and faith in Jesus)
Point 3: Bitterness leads to betrayal (Gen. 37:23-28).


23 When Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped off Joseph’s robe, the robe of many colors that he had on. 24 Then they took him and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty, without water.

25 They sat down to eat a meal, and when they looked up, there was a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were carrying aromatic gum, balsam, and resin, going down to Egypt.

26 Judah said to his brothers, “What do we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? 27 Come on, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay a hand on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh,” and his brothers agreed. 28 When Midianite traders passed by, his brothers pulled Joseph out of the pit and sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took Joseph to Egypt.

EXPLAIN that since Reuben had forestalled Joseph’s murder by asking his brothers not to kill Joseph and to cast him into a pit instead, the brothers, in their bitterness, found another opportunity to sin. Also explain the aftermath of their sin and its cover-up.

- Seeing a caravan of Ishmaelites approaching, Judah suggested a new plan. Killing Joseph would be of no profit, and as much as they hated Joseph, he was their brother, their own flesh and blood. So instead, they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites as a slave for twenty pieces of silver, a modest return. Judah offered selling Joseph as a slave in place of killing him, but this is not to his credit. Judah saw Joseph was worth just enough not to take his life but not worth more than a small sum of silver divided between the brothers.

- The brothers’ final act that day was an attempt to hide their sin (Gen. 37:29-35). They slaughtered a male goat, dipped Joseph’s robe in its blood, and sent the robe to their father to make it appear as if Joseph had been killed by a wild animal, part of their original plan (vv. 20,31). They deceived Jacob, but a robe covered with goat’s blood would not cover their sin before God.

READ the following paragraph in the DDG (p. 14).

In the end, the brothers did not murder Joseph, at least not with their hands. But they did murder him in their hearts (see Matt. 5:21-22) as they sold him into slavery and then deceived their father, Jacob, concerning his fate. Even so, God would turn their plan around. He would accomplish a redemptive reversal.

EXPLAIN in general terms the redemptive reversal that God would bring to pass from this situation.

- Joseph’s brothers devised an evil plan, but God works all things together for good—even jealousy, bitterness, and betrayal. God would eventually bring about a redemptive reversal from this situation, using the brother they had cast aside and sold into slavery to preserve their lives in a foreign land. God used the brothers’ sin of selling Joseph into slavery to position Joseph to save the lives of the very ones who reviled him for being a dreamer and to preserve the line of the coming Messiah.
INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

How have you seen God redeem situations for His glory and our good? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

EXPLAIN how the gospel of Jesus is the ultimate redemptive reversal with the following paragraph in the DDG (p. 14).

We are more like Joseph’s brothers than we care to admit: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). But God, who is rich in mercy, provided salvation to us through His greatest act of redemptive reversal—the rejection and crucifixion of His Son followed by His resurrection from the dead. The blood shed by Jesus on the cross covers our sin—not in an attempt to hide it as Joseph’s brothers had done but as a satisfaction of our sin debt owed to God.

Voices from Church History

“My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought: My sin—not in part, but the whole Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!”

—Horatio G. Spafford (1828-1888)

FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 14), noting that Jesus’ blood could cover our sin because He never sinned.

Temptation and Sin: Jesus was tempted like we are, and yet, He never sinned but faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation that may lead us to sin, and we pray for God to deliver us from evil.

Essential Doctrine “Temptation and Sin”: Temptation is not the equivalent of sin. Temptation can refer to natural and good desires that are twisted and directed toward pleasing of self rather than giving glory to God. Jesus was tempted like we are (Matt. 4), and yet He never sinned but faithfully resisted temptation and followed the will of His Father. Knowing our weakness, we are to be on guard against temptation that may lead us to sin (Matt. 26:41), and we pray for God to deliver us from evil (Matt. 6:13).
EXPLAIN: Clarify the connection between Joseph and Jesus, between the brothers and us, and the redemptive reversal of the gospel.

- Jesus, like Joseph, was betrayed by His own. He too was sold for the price of a slave: thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15). But Judas was not the only betrayer—we all are. We are the people God created for His glory, but we have all betrayed God, pursuing our own glory and seeking enjoyment and meaning apart from our Creator.

- In His greatest act of redemptive reversal, God turned the betrayal against His Son around for our good. Jesus paid for sins He did not commit to give life to people who did not deserve it. Through the Holy Spirit, we are to fight selfishness and sin, such as favoritism, bitterness, and betrayal, knowing that Jesus gave His life to put these evil acts to death. With love and grace for all, we join in calling others to become part of God’s family for His honor and praise.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 15), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because we are fully accepted by the Father in Christ, we fight selfishness and sin to live in a way that brings honor and praise to God’s Son and guides others to become part of God’s family.

- What are some ways you will fight against selfishness and sin in your life this week?
- How can your group reach out to those who have been wronged and rejected by others?
- How can you use past times of redemptive reversal in your life to point others to God’s work in the gospel?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, You are sovereign and good, and according to Your will, You redeem the sinful choices of humanity. Help us by Your Holy Spirit to trust in the wisdom of Your plan that at times includes the suffering of Your people as we encounter favoritism, hatred, strife, jealousy, bitterness, and betrayal. Direct us as we direct others to Your Son, Jesus, who experienced the brunt of these sins in the fullest of ways and then died and rose again in order to remove their power once and for all. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 16-18), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 19) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Daily Study devotions in the DDG (pp. 16-18) will help group members get into God’s Word and study it for themselves. Encourage One Another (p. 19) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 16-18) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.
- Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 1 as a part of point 1 in the session: As we consider a father’s unequal love for his children, we should be drawn to delight in the Father’s equal and steadfast love for His children. God does not play favorites within His family.

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- Day 3: “Christ has crushed sin under His heel, and in doing so, He has freed us from its power in our lives.”
- Day 5: “God is at work in us, but not only us. He is changing us and others for His glory and our good.”

Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member’s DDG (p. 19) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using The Gospel Project in their groups.

- Encourage group members to comfort one another with the truth that humanity’s sinfulness will never overcome God’s sovereign goodness.
- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.
Additional Commentary

Point 1: Favoritism leads to hatred and strife (Gen. 37:3-8).

“Family history affected Joseph and his brothers. Using craftiness and deceit, Jacob received Esau’s inheritance and the blessing of their father, Isaac (Gen. 25:27-34; 27:33-36). Later, God spoke to Jacob in a dream and he worshiped Him at Bethel (28:11-22). Laban deceived Jacob into marrying Leah; afterward Jacob had to work seven more years before he could marry his beloved Rachel. Leah produced Jacob’s children, in a loveless marriage. The sisters, Rachel and Leah, bickered. Rachel remained childless and blamed Jacob as she watched Leah and two slaves give sons to Jacob (29:16–30:21). Rachel finally gave birth to Joseph, who met 10 half-brothers and 3 stepmothers (30:22-24). Confusion reigned.”

“Like his father Jacob (28:12-15; 31:10-13), Joseph received two dreams from God during his lifetime. Both portrayed Joseph as gaining a position of supremacy in his family, though the symbols differed greatly. The first dream used an agricultural image (v. 7). The second, more important and wider in scope than the first, was astronomical (vv. 9-10). The pairing of dreams with a shared meaning meant that God would certainly make the events happen (41:32). Ancient interpreters suggested that the moon signified Bilhah since Joseph’s mother Rachel was dead at this time (35:19).”

Point 2: Jealousy leads to an opportunity to sin (Gen. 37:18-22).

“When his brothers saw him coming, they planned to kill that dreamer and to throw his body into a cistern (37:18-20a). Their nickname for him showed their contempt, as did their mocking comment see what comes of his dreams! Their plan would not only affect Joseph, but also their father who loved him. They planned to tell him that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal (37:20b). Perhaps they were also trying to pay their father back for his favouritism.”

“When the ten brothers saw him coming in the distance, they saw their opportunity to get rid of this hated brother whom they refer to contemptuously as that dreamer (37:18-20). We are not told who originated the plot to kill him, but it is quite possible that it was one of the brothers about whom Joseph had given bad report (37:2). These included Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher. Joseph would be vulnerable to them, for he would be one against ten—or rather one against nine, for Reuben, the eldest, spoke out in his defence.”
“Two things probably motivated Reuben to try to save Joseph’s life. First, as the oldest son (35:23), he was most responsible to his father for the safety of his young sibling. Second, after having sexual relations with his father’s concubine, Bilhah (35:22), Reuben was undoubtedly attempting to get back in Jacob’s good graces.”

**Point 3: Bitterness leads to betrayal (Gen. 37:23-28).**

“A cistern was either a natural receptacle or one dug out to catch rainwater. Jeremiah’s enemies, too, imprisoned the prophet in a cistern, expecting him to starve to death (Jer. 38:9). If this were the plan of the brothers, it was a mere technicality that they did not shed blood in the murder of their sibling. The empty cistern explained why Joseph would not drown, but that it was in the wilderness left little possibility that he would be discovered and rescued. The dry pit may be an indicator also that water was scarce and famine loomed on the horizon.”

“Mesopotamian documents from the early second millennium BC reveal that the price of slaves ranged from 15 to 30 shekels (20 shekels is the value in the Hammurabi Code). (At any given time in the history of Egypt there was a significant substratum of slaves. Many of these were captives of war, but there was also a large slave trade. So many of the slaves came from ‘Asia’—Canaan, Mesopotamia, Hatti, Syria—that the word ‘Asiatic’ became synonymous with ‘slave.’)”

**References**

WHAT’S NEXT?

Fall 2018  **In the Beginning**  Creation and the Fall (Genesis; Job)
God Establishes a Covenant People (Genesis)
God Grows His Covenant People (Genesis)

Winter 2018-19  **Out of Egypt**  God Redeems His People (Genesis; Exodus)
God Provides for His People (Exodus)
God Receives Worship from His People (Exodus; Leviticus)

Spring 2019  **Into the Promised Land**  God Guides His People (Numbers; Deuteronomy)
God Gives His People a Home (Joshua)
God Delivers His People (Judges; Ruth)

Summer 2019  **A Kingdom Provided**  God Provides a King (1 Samuel)
God Provides a Godly King (1–2 Samuel; Psalms)
God Provides a Wise King (1 Kings; Ecclesiastes)

Fall 2019  **A Nation Divided**  God Speaks to His People (1–2 Kings)
God Judges the Sin of His People (2 Kings; Prophets)
God Shows Mercy to His People (2 Chronicles; Prophets)

Winter 2019-20  **A People Restored**  God Sustains His People (Daniel)
God Restores His People (Ezra; Prophets)
God Prepares His People (Nehemiah; Esther; Malachi)

Spring 2020  **Jesus the Messiah**  Jesus Comes into the World (Luke)
Jesus Begins His Ministry (Gospels)
Jesus Among the People (Gospels)

Summer 2020  **Jesus the Servant**  Jesus the Healer (Gospels)
Jesus the Teacher (Gospels)
Jesus the Miracle-Worker (Gospels)

Fall 2020  **Jesus the Savior**  Jesus and the Kingdom (Gospels)
Jesus the Savior (Gospels)
Jesus the Risen King (Gospels)

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