



YEAR 3—The God Who Pursues Relationship: A Story of God's People

Module 2—Genesis Part 2

Lesson 6: Jacob Blesses His Sons and Dies—Genesis 49-50

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

(A theological and biblical reflection on today's Scripture passage.)

As one knows from the rest of the biblical narrative, Jacob's words certainly have a major impact on the future of the nation of Israel. Jacob establishes, with his final words, the 12 tribes of Israel. All Jacob's sons were alive. By calling his sons together, Jacob was calling them to come together in love—they should come together and live as one family.

We shouldn't think that this discourse was the sharing of Jacob's personal feelings. Jacob's statements of love, anger, or favoritism are not his own words but the words of God and descriptive of God's feelings through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. These words, although not directly prophetic, declare the purpose of God as it relates to the respecting individual characteristics of the tribes.

Tribes are groups of people made up of clans and families. These families were related by blood. However, the tribal society also included those who were grafted into the families through adoption, slavery, marriage, or covenant. The nation of Israel was a society of tribes designated by the ancestors from which they descended. The historical origins of the tribes of Israel came directly from chapter 49 of Genesis. The Twelve Tribes: Reuben, Simeon (Levi), Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Ephraim, and Manasseh.

Judah becomes the dominant tribe. Judah is confirmed by Jacob's blessing as the leader of the family of God (Psalm 78:67-68). Jesus was the lion of Judah.

Jacob's burial was incredibly important to the entirety of the Egyptian culture. (That is, the burial of an official's father was an important matter in Egyptian culture.) Genesis 50:7 tells us that all of Pharaoh's officials accompanied Joseph, plus Joseph's entire household. Joseph was a high official and showing respect for Jacob's death was proper for the Egyptians.

GOD'S STORY

Blessing prevails. Blessing is God sharing God's life with us. Moses, telling the people of God the story of their beginning reveals their history, their slavery, their rebellion, and so on. However, evil does not triumph. Blessing does. This is the message of Genesis via Moses to the people. God is in charge of all of creation. God is the ultimate king.

God's promises get fulfilled. This is the theme of the first five books of the Bible. People never interrupt God's plans, and God's plan are never derailed. This is a key message to the Israelites via Moses.

The promise of God to Abraham involved 3 main aspects—descendants, relationship, and land. Genesis focuses on God's promise of descendants, Leviticus focuses on relationship, and Numbers and Deuteronomy focus on the land. In Joshua, that promise is fulfilled.

OUR STORY

Like all of humanity, Jacob's sons had goals and dreams of their own. Jacob's discourse to his sons was his way of articulating to his sons that they had a duty to put themselves aside and serve others and lead them for a greater cause—the purpose of God.

In order to work for the good of others, we've got to be willing to put our own self aside and overcome any arrogance or self-righteousness. The key to serving others is to put your own interests aside. How can we do this?

- 1. Ask for input and feedback.** Ask those who know you well for their honest and productive input about how you come across to others in conversations, and so on. Ask if your approach to life has any egotism to it. Be reachable and provide an open-handed posture where people can share their thoughts with you without fear of making you mad or defensive. This will help you as you put off arrogance and find ways to help others.
- 2. Question your intentions.** Do you lead this Bible study for your personal enjoyment or to help others? When in discussion as groups are you prepared to let others do most of the talking? Do you lead the Bible study because of the way it makes you feel or do you do it to serve others?
- 3. Identify your responsibility.** Realize your responsibility as a Christian is to guide people to Jesus, not to exercise your power over them and force them to believe in Jesus.

Follow these for values to keep your arrogance level in check and submit to the needs of others.

OTHERS' STORY

Various reasons might cause Joseph's brothers to think that Joseph might seek revenge. Notwithstanding the message their father Jacob gave them all based on Joseph's life and human nature as a whole, his brothers thought since their dad was dead Joseph may now retaliate for those who detested and wounded him without real reason.

Not being able to resist, or to run away, his brothers attempted to soften him by humbling themselves. They appealed to Joseph calling themselves the servants of Jacob's (their recently dead father's) God. Joseph remembers his previous dreams that he told his brothers of that started this whole journey. He now knows that his dreams are fulfilled. Joseph directs them not to be afraid, but to fear God instead; to humble themselves before the Lord, and to seek forgiveness from God for their actions. Joseph assures them of his own kindness to them. He comforted them, and, to dismiss all their worries, he was very kind to them.

When we experience brokenness with others we must seek to find ways to be encouraged through this story of Joseph. To those we love and forgive, we must not only do good things, but we must also use our words to speak kindness as Joseph did to his brothers.

THE WORLD'S STORY

The world walks under a constant cloud of shame. Most people I run into start life with a feeling of embarrassment. For some reason those outside the church have difficulty seeing that life was meant to be full and alive, not held captive to feelings of shame, blame, doubt and confusion.

As we walk about the world and interact with people we must find ways to help them see Jesus as the hope of the world. We must also help them recognize that through Jesus the shame and blame by which they so often are controlled can be eliminated through a personal relationship with Jesus.

To show them Jesus, we must live like Jesus did. Below are some clearly seen characteristics of Jesus in the gospels. In what way will you choose to live them out?

- Peace (Harmony with God, self, others and the world)
- Justice (Giving people the chance to experience fairness by righting the wrongs of the world)
- Grace (Live a generous life even when people don't deserve it)
- Mercy (Find ways to ease the stress of others)
- Compassion (Showing an authentic concern for others in need)
- Trust (Rely on people and think the best of them first)
- Love (Showing and sustaining adoration and devotion to another)
- Hope (To live expectantly, knowing that it is in hope that we know God's mission to restore the world to its intended wholeness will be made complete and all things will be made new)
- Faithful Humility (Consistently live with a spirit of meekness)
- Godliness (Pursue holiness and a devout life)
- Truth (Live life confidently knowing that what you believe is real and be honest and loyal to it)
- Life (Accept the abundance that God grants when in pursuit of what it means to live fully human)
- Resurrection (Give people a glimpse of what it means to live the resurrection of Jesus, a rebirth)