

The Book of Genesis, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 25: Jacob's Family Comes to Egypt

Genesis 46:1–48:22

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

These chapters bring Jacob's family down to Egypt, reunite the old man with Joseph, settle them in Goshen, and record Jacob's faith-filled final acts, including his blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh. Doctrinally, the lesson teaches God's reassuring presence in seasons of fear and transition, His providence in preserving His people and advancing His larger plan, faith that reaches beyond death and holds to God's promises, the testimony of God as our lifelong Shepherd and Redeemer, and, climactically, the intentional passing on of faith and blessing to the next generation. The chapters also quietly advance the story toward the Exodus, which God had foretold to Abraham.

Keep two threads in view. First, God's providence and faithfulness: what once looked like the family's ruin is now revealed as God's means of preserving them, and the move to Egypt is itself part of God's foretold plan that will lead, in time, to the Exodus and the further unfolding of redemption. Encourage students to read their own stories in this light, trusting God's providence over the long arc. Second, the generational transmission of faith: Jacob's blessing of his grandchildren models the deliberate handing of covenant faith to those who come after, a theme of great importance for a congregation. The crossing of Jacob's hands, putting Ephraim before Manasseh, shows once more God's grace working beyond human convention.

Formationally, this passage calls students to trust God's presence in transitions, to recognize His providence over their lives, to live and die with faith in His promises (finishing well, not growing too at home in this world), to remember and testify to God's lifelong faithfulness, and above all to intentionally pass their faith on to their children and grandchildren. Lead them to the faithful Shepherd and Redeemer who is with His people across every generation.

Question 1

Student Question:

As Jacob feared leaving the Promised Land for Egypt, God reassured him, "Do not be afraid... I myself will go down with you, and I will also bring you up again" (46:1–4). What does this teach us about God's presence and reassurance in seasons of change, fear, and transition?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

On his way to Egypt, Jacob stops at Beersheba to worship, and there God meets his fear. The old man is afraid: leaving the Promised Land, going to a foreign country, uncertain whether this is

right. And God speaks tenderly: 'Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt... I myself will go down with you, and I will also bring you up again' (46:3-4).

Draw out God's reassurance in transition. Major life changes, even good ones, stir fear and uncertainty. God does not rebuke Jacob's fear; He answers it with the promise of His presence. The same assurance He gave at Bethel decades earlier ('I am with you,' 28:15) He renews now at the end of Jacob's life. God's presence is the antidote to the fear of change.

Note that Jacob sought God in worship before the journey, and God met him there. When we are facing fearful transitions, the place to bring our fear is to God in worship and prayer. There we hear again the promise that steadies us: He goes with us.

Help students see the breadth of the promise: 'I will go down with you, and I will also bring you up again.' God's presence is not only for the journey down into the unknown but for the whole arc, including the return. He is with His people in the going and the coming, in Egypt and beyond. His presence spans the whole story.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's reassuring presence in seasons of fear and transition (Genesis 46:3-4).
- God answering our fear with the promise of His presence, not rebuke.
- Bringing our fears to God in worship before the journey.
- God's presence spanning the whole arc: the going and the return.

Discussion Prompts

- Why did Jacob need this reassurance from God?
- How does God respond to Jacob's fear?
- What does it mean that God promises to go with us and bring us back?

Question 2

Student Question:

What change, transition, or uncertain step are you facing, or avoiding, right now? How does the promise of God's presence, "I will go with you," speak to your fear?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies God's reassurance to the student's transitions. Life is full of changes that stir fear: a move, a new job, a loss, a diagnosis, an empty nest, retirement, a step of obedience into the unknown. Jacob's fear is ours.

Help students name the specific transition they are facing or avoiding. Fear of change often keeps us stuck, unwilling to take the step God may be calling us to. Naming the fear and the change is the first step toward facing it with faith.

Apply the promise. The same God who said 'I will go with you' to Jacob says to us, in Christ, 'I am with you always' (Matthew 28:20) and 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' (Hebrews 13:5). We do not face our transitions alone; the God who calls us forward goes with us.

Invite reflection: the change or uncertain step the student is facing, the fear it stirs, and how the promise of God's presence would change the way they face it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Facing life's transitions and changes with their attendant fears.
- Fear of change keeping us stuck.
- The promise of God's presence in Christ (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5).
- Facing transitions in the company of the God who goes with us.

Discussion Prompts

- What transition or uncertain step are you facing or avoiding?
- What fear does it stir in you?
- How does 'I will go with you' speak to that fear?

Question 3

Student Question:

The family that was once nearly destroyed by betrayal was now preserved and provided for in Egypt, just as God had planned and even foretold (46:3; compare 15:13-16). What does this teach us about God's providence in preserving His people and working out His larger purposes?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The family that was nearly destroyed by betrayal is now preserved and richly provided for in Egypt. They settle in Goshen, safe from the famine, and grow. What once looked like ruin, Joseph sold, the family torn apart, is now revealed as the very means by which God kept them alive. The providence runs into daylight.

Note that this preservation was part of God's foretold plan. Long before, God had told Abraham that his descendants would sojourn in a land not their own, be afflicted, and then come out (15:13-16). The move to Egypt is not a detour but a step in God's larger purpose, which will lead in time to the Exodus and the forming of the nation. God is working a plan far bigger than this one family's survival.

Draw out the doctrine of providence in preservation. God preserves His people and advances His purposes through the events of history, including the hard ones. The famine, the betrayal, the migration to Egypt, all of it served God's plan. Nothing was wasted or outside His sovereign care.

Help students see the long arc. God's purposes often span generations and centuries. The family's descent into Egypt sets up the great redemption of the Exodus, which itself foreshadows the greater redemption in Christ. God's providence is patient and vast, weaving individual stories into a grand design.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's providence in preserving His people through hardship (Genesis 46–47).
- The move to Egypt as part of God's foretold plan (Genesis 15:13–16).
- God advancing purposes far larger than one family's survival.
- God's providence spanning generations toward the Exodus and ultimately Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- How was the family's near-ruin turned into their preservation?
- How does the move to Egypt fit God's larger, foretold plan?
- What does this teach about the scope of God's providence?

Question 4

Student Question:

Where can you see God's providence and provision at work in the story of your own life or family, even in events that seemed difficult or unwelcome at the time?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question invites students to trace God's providence in their own lives. Just as the family could now look back and see God's hand in events that once seemed disastrous, we can often, with hindsight, see God's providence over our own stories.

Help students reflect on their history. Where did a closed door, a hard season, an unwelcome turn, prove, in time, to be God's provision or protection or preparation? Recognizing God's past faithfulness builds trust for the present and future.

Guard against forcing every event into a tidy explanation. We cannot always see why God allows what He does, and some of providence remains hidden this side of heaven. But the pattern of Scripture, and often of our own lives, is that God is faithfully at work even in what we did not choose and would not have chosen.

Invite reflection: where the student can trace God's providence and provision in their own life or family story, even in events that were difficult at the time, and how seeing that builds their trust going forward.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Tracing God's providence over our own life and family.
- Hard or unwelcome events proving, in time, to be God's provision.
- Recognizing past faithfulness to build present trust.
- Humility where providence remains hidden.

Discussion Prompts

- Where can you trace God's providence in your own story?
- What once seemed difficult that you now see God used for good?
- How does seeing His past faithfulness strengthen your trust?

Question 5

Student Question:

Even in comfortable Egypt, Jacob's faith reached beyond his own death; he insisted on being buried in the Promised Land, trusting God's promise for the generations to come (47:29–31; 48:21). What does this teach us about living and dying with faith in God's promises, and about not growing too at home in this world?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Even settled in comfortable Egypt, Jacob's faith remains fixed on God's promise. As death approaches, he makes Joseph swear to carry his body back to Canaan to be buried with Abraham and Isaac (47:29–31), and he assures his sons, 'I am about to die, but God will be with you and bring you again to the land of your fathers' (48:21). His faith reaches beyond his own grave.

Draw out the refusal to grow too at home in Egypt. Jacob would not let the comfort and prosperity of Egypt make him, or his family, forget that this was not their final home. His insistence on burial in the land of promise was a faith-statement: God's promises are sure, and our true home lies with Him.

Connect to the believer's pilgrim faith. Hebrews 11 includes Jacob and Joseph among those who 'died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar,' acknowledging they were 'strangers and exiles' seeking a better, heavenly homeland (Hebrews 11:13–16). We too are called to hold this world loosely and to live as those whose citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Teach what it means to finish well. Jacob's last acts were acts of faith, worship, and blessing (Hebrews 11:21). To finish well is to hold to God's promises to the very end, to keep eternity in view, and to refuse to let the comforts of this world dull our hope. The faith that began at Bethel held firm at the deathbed.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith reaching beyond death and holding to God's promises (Genesis 47:29–31; 48:21).
- Refusing to grow too at home in this world.
- Pilgrim faith: strangers and exiles seeking a heavenly homeland (Hebrews 11:13–16).
- Finishing well: holding to God's promises and keeping eternity in view (Hebrews 11:21).

Discussion Prompts

- Why did Jacob insist on being buried in the Promised Land?
- What does it mean to not grow too at home in this world?
- What does it look like to 'finish well' in faith?

Question 6

Student Question:

How does keeping eternity and God's promises in view shape the way you live now? What would it look like for you to "finish well," holding to God's promises to the very end?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies pilgrim faith to the student's life and outlook. Keeping eternity and God's promises in view profoundly shapes how we live now, our priorities, our use of time and money, our response to suffering, our grip on comfort and possessions.

Help students see the danger of growing too at home in this world. Comfort and prosperity, good gifts in themselves, can dull our hope and make us forget that this is not our final home. Like Jacob, we must keep our eyes on the promise, living as pilgrims even amid Egypt's comforts.

Apply the idea of finishing well across all of life, not only its end. Finishing well is the fruit of living well by faith day after day, holding to God's promises, keeping eternity in view, and refusing to let the world capture our hearts. The way we live now shapes the way we will finish.

Invite reflection: how keeping eternity and God's promises in view would change the student's present priorities and choices, and what it would look like for them to live now as someone who intends, by God's grace, to finish well.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Keeping eternity and God's promises in view shaping present life.
- The danger of comfort dulling our hope.
- Living as pilgrims even amid earthly comforts.
- Finishing well as the fruit of living well by faith daily.

Discussion Prompts

- How does keeping eternity in view shape the way you live now?

- Where are you tempted to grow too at home in this world?
- What would 'finishing well' require of you, starting now?

Question 7

Student Question:

Jacob summarized his life by testifying to "the God who has been my shepherd all my life long... the angel who has redeemed me from all evil" (48:15–16). What does it mean to know God as our faithful Shepherd and Redeemer across a whole lifetime?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

As he blesses Joseph's sons, Jacob sums up his whole life in a beautiful testimony: he blesses them in the name of 'the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil' (48:15–16). In two phrases, the old man captures the meaning of his journey.

Draw out 'the God who has been my shepherd all my life long.' Jacob's life had been anything but smooth, deception, exile, hard labor, family strife, grief, famine, yet looking back, he sees one constant: God shepherding him through it all. The shepherd image, which David will later make famous in Psalm 23, speaks of God's faithful guidance, provision, and care across every season.

Draw out 'the angel who has redeemed me from all evil.' Jacob testifies that God had been his Redeemer, rescuing him again and again from dangers, from his own failures, from the consequences of his sin. His life was a long story of being redeemed by grace, not of his own deserving.

Help students see the value of such a backward look. To know God as our lifelong Shepherd and Redeemer is to be able to face the future with confidence; the God who has been faithful through all our yesterdays will be faithful through all our tomorrows. Jacob's testimony is the settled conviction of a faith proven over a lifetime.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God as our faithful Shepherd across a whole lifetime (Genesis 48:15; Psalm 23).
- God as our Redeemer, rescuing us repeatedly by grace.
- Jacob's hard life reinterpreted by faith as God's faithful shepherding.
- Past faithfulness as the ground of future confidence.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Jacob sum up his whole life in 48:15–16?
- What does it mean to know God as Shepherd and Redeemer across a lifetime?
- How does past faithfulness give confidence for the future?

Question 8

Student Question:

When you recount your own life, do you see and give thanks for God's faithfulness, His shepherding and redeeming, through it all? How might regularly remembering God's faithfulness strengthen your present faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question invites students to make their own backward look and give thanks. Like Jacob, we can review our lives and trace God's shepherding and redeeming hand, even through the hard chapters.

Help students practice remembering. Scripture constantly calls God's people to remember His faithfulness, to recount His deeds, to set up memorials, because we are prone to forget. Deliberately recalling how God has guided, provided, protected, and forgiven strengthens present faith and fuels gratitude.

Encourage the reinterpreting of hard chapters. Jacob's life included much pain, yet by faith he saw God's shepherding through it. We too can look back and see, often only in hindsight, how God was with us and at work even in our darkest seasons.

Invite a concrete practice: the student recounting specific instances of God's shepherding and redeeming over their life, and a habit of remembering God's faithfulness, perhaps in a journal, in prayer, or in testimony, to strengthen their present trust.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Recounting and giving thanks for God's lifelong faithfulness.
- The biblical discipline of remembering, against our tendency to forget.
- Reinterpreting hard chapters by faith as God's shepherding.
- Memory of God's faithfulness strengthening present faith.

Discussion Prompts

- Where can you trace God's shepherding and redeeming over your life?
- Why are we so prone to forget God's faithfulness?
- How might regularly remembering it strengthen your present faith?

Question 9

Student Question:

In blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, the dying Jacob deliberately passed on the covenant faith and blessing to the next generation, handing his grandchildren to the God who had been faithful

to him (48:1-20). Why is the intentional passing on of faith to children and grandchildren so important, and how is it done (compare Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point, and it is profoundly relevant for a congregation: the intentional passing on of faith to the next generation. The dying Jacob gathers his grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh, adopts them as his own, and deliberately blesses them, handing them to the God who had been faithful to him. His final energies go to transmitting the covenant faith forward.

Draw out the deliberateness. This is not an accidental or assumed transmission; Jacob acts intentionally to bless and claim these boys for the covenant, recounting God's faithfulness over them. Faith is not transmitted automatically; it must be intentionally taught, modeled, and handed on. Each generation is one generation away from losing it.

Note the crossing of the hands. Jacob deliberately puts his right hand on the younger Ephraim and his left on the older Manasseh, again placing the younger first, against custom and against Joseph's expectation. Once more God's grace refuses to be bound by human convention; the blessing flows by God's choice, not by human seniority. Even at the end, the theme of grace runs through Genesis.

Teach the urgency and the method of passing on faith, drawing on the rest of Scripture. The method: 'You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way' (Deuteronomy 6:7); 'bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord' (Ephesians 6:4). It happens through deliberate teaching, consistent example, prayer, blessing, and the everyday conversation of a home and a church centered on God. Timothy's faith came through his grandmother and mother (2 Timothy 1:5); generational faith is God's design.

Land it for the congregation. The greatest legacy we can leave is not money or success but a living faith handed to our children and grandchildren, and to the younger believers God puts in our care. Jacob, at the end of a long and complicated life, spent his last strength blessing the next generation and entrusting them to God: 'I am about to die, but God will be with you' (48:21). This is the calling of every older believer: to know the faithful Shepherd ourselves, and then to hand the next generation to Him. A church that does this endures; one that fails to do it withers in a generation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The intentional passing on of faith and blessing to the next generation (Genesis 48).
- Faith transmitted deliberately, not automatically; each generation one step from losing it.
- The crossing of hands: God's grace not bound by human convention.
- The method of transmission: diligent teaching, example, prayer, blessing (Deuteronomy 6:7; Ephesians 6:4).

- Generational faith as God's design (2 Timothy 1:5).
- The greatest legacy as a living faith handed to those who come after us.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Jacob intentionally pass on faith to his grandsons?
- Why is faith not transmitted automatically, and how is it handed on?
- What is the most important legacy we can leave the next generation?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole passage. Name one specific way God is calling you to trust His presence in transition, to see His providence over your story, to finish well, and to pass your faith on to those who come after you.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this capstone to gather the chapters into one resolve. We have seen God's reassuring presence in transition, His providence over the story, faith that finishes well, the testimony of a lifelong Shepherd and Redeemer, and the deliberate handing of faith to the next generation. The question is what God is forming in this student.

Press for the specific. For one it is trusting God's presence in a fearful change; for another, seeing His providence over their story; for another, finishing well with eyes on eternity; for another, intentionally passing faith to their children or grandchildren.

Close with the faithful Shepherd. The God who shepherded Jacob all his life, who went with him into Egypt and promised to bring him up again, is the same God who shepherds us in Christ, the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). To be formed by this passage is to trust His presence, rest in His providence, hold His promises to the end, and spend our lives handing the next generation to the faithful Shepherd and Redeemer who has held us all our days.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Trusting God's presence in transition and His providence over our story.
- Finishing well with eyes on eternity.
- Intentionally passing faith to the next generation.
- The Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

Discussion Prompts

- Which call is God pressing on you: trusting His presence, seeing His providence, finishing well, or passing on faith?

- To whom is God calling you to hand your faith, and how?
- How does knowing the Good Shepherd shape how you live and finish?