

The Book of Genesis, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 26: Jacob's Blessing, Death, and Joseph's Faith

Genesis 49:1–50:26

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This final passage brings Genesis to its close with Jacob's prophetic blessings, his death and burial in the Promised Land, Joseph's climactic words of forgiveness and providence, and Joseph's own death in faith. Doctrinally, the lesson teaches the messianic hope (the scepter and Shiloh of Judah, fulfilled in Christ), honest reckoning with our character under God's grace, the completeness of true forgiveness, the capstone of the providence theme (evil meant for good), and a faith that looks beyond our own lifetime to God's certain future. It also gathers up the whole movement of Genesis, from creation and fall and the first promise of a Redeemer, toward its fulfillment in Christ.

Give special weight to two doctrinal high points. First, the prophecy over Judah (49:10): the scepter will not depart from Judah until 'Shiloh' comes, to whom the obedience of the peoples belongs. This is a messianic prophecy, fulfilled in Jesus, the King from Judah's line, 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah' (Revelation 5:5). It shows the thread of promise, begun in Genesis 3:15, advancing surely toward Christ. Second, Joseph's words in 50:20, the capstone of the providence theme: God's sovereign goodness turning human evil to good, without excusing the evil. Connect this once more to the cross (Acts 2:23), the supreme instance of the pattern.

Formationally, this passage, and this final lesson of the study, calls students to live under the rule of Christ the King, to face themselves honestly while resting in God's grace, to receive and extend complete forgiveness, to trust God's good purpose over the evil and hardship in their lives, and to hold God's promises in faith even beyond their own lifetimes. As the capstone of the whole Genesis study, lead students to look back over all they have learned and to name how God has used it to draw them closer to Jesus, the offspring of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Lion of Judah, in whom all the promises of Genesis find their yes.

Question 1

Student Question:

In blessing his sons, Jacob prophesied over Judah, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah... until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (49:10). How does this prophecy point forward to Christ, the King from Judah's line (compare Revelation 5:5), and what does it reveal about God's plan unfolding across Genesis?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Among the blessings over his sons, Jacob's words over Judah rise to a prophetic peak: 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples' (49:10). This is one of the great messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.

Unfold its meaning. The scepter and ruler's staff are symbols of kingship; Jacob foresees that kingship will belong to Judah's line. This was fulfilled first in David, from the tribe of Judah, and ultimately in 'Shiloh,' a term widely understood to point to the Messiah, the one to whom the kingship truly belongs and to whom 'the obedience of the peoples' (the nations) will be given. From a deathbed in Egypt, Jacob sees the coming King.

Trace the fulfillment in Christ. Jesus was born of the tribe of Judah, of the line of David, and is hailed in Revelation as 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah' who has conquered (Revelation 5:5). To Him belongs all authority, and to Him 'the obedience of the peoples' is due, as the gospel goes to all nations and people of every tribe bow before Him. The prophecy reaches its fulfillment in the King named Jesus.

Help students see the sweep of Genesis. The thread of promise begun in 3:15 (the offspring who would crush the serpent), narrowed through Abraham's seed, now lands on Judah's line and the coming King. Genesis is not a collection of disconnected stories; it is the opening movement of one great story moving steadily toward Christ. The God who made this promise keeps it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The messianic prophecy of the scepter and Shiloh of Judah (Genesis 49:10).
- Kingship belonging to Judah's line, fulfilled in David and ultimately Christ.
- Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to whom the obedience of the peoples is due (Revelation 5:5).
- The thread of promise from Genesis 3:15 advancing through Judah toward Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- What does Jacob's prophecy over Judah foretell?
- How is it fulfilled in Jesus?
- How does this show the whole sweep of Genesis moving toward Christ?

Question 2

Student Question:

Jacob foresaw a King to whom "the obedience of the peoples" would belong, fulfilled in Jesus. What does it mean for you, practically, to live under the rule of Christ the King, giving Him your obedience and allegiance?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies the kingship of Christ to the student's life. Jacob foresaw a King to whom 'the obedience of the peoples' would belong, and that King is Jesus, who now reigns at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33–36; Colossians 1:13). To confess Him as Lord is to live under His rule.

Help students grasp what living under Christ's rule means practically. It means giving Him our obedience and allegiance in every area, our decisions, our relationships, our money, our priorities, our very selves. He is not merely Savior to be received but King to be obeyed. 'Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?' (Luke 6:46).

Address the heart of allegiance. The King who deserves our obedience is the same King who gave Himself for us; our obedience flows not from cold duty but from grateful love for the One who loved us first. To live under His rule is the path of true freedom and life, not bondage.

Invite reflection: where the student is genuinely living under the rule of Christ the King, and where some area of life is still withheld from His authority, along with a step toward fuller obedience and allegiance to Him.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Living under the rule of Christ the King (Acts 2:33–36; Colossians 1:13).
- Obedience and allegiance to Christ in every area of life (Luke 6:46).
- Obedience flowing from grateful love, not cold duty.
- Christ's rule as the path of true freedom and life.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean, practically, to live under the rule of Christ the King?
- What area of life is still withheld from His authority?
- How does His having given Himself for us shape our obedience?

Question 3

Student Question:

Jacob's words over his sons were honest, naming both strengths and serious failures (such as Reuben's instability and the violence of Simeon and Levi, 49:3–7), reflecting the real consequences of their choices, yet God's grace would still work through them. What does this teach us about facing the truth about ourselves and about God's grace?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jacob's blessings were honest, sometimes painfully so. He named Reuben's instability and the sin that cost him his preeminence; he named the cruel anger of Simeon and Levi and its consequences (49:3–7). He did not flatter his sons or pretend their failures away. The blessing was also a truthful reckoning with their characters and choices.

Draw out the value of honest self-knowledge. Scripture does not present its heroes, or their children, with airbrushed perfection; it tells the truth. And we are called to the same honesty about ourselves, facing our real failures and their real consequences rather than excusing or hiding them. 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves' (1 John 1:8).

But hold this together with grace. The honest naming of sin is not the last word. Consider Levi: rebuked here for violence, his tribe would later be set apart for the priestly service of God, their zeal redeemed for holy purposes. God's grace can take even our failures and, where there is repentance, redeem them for His service. Honest reckoning and redeeming grace belong together.

Help students avoid two errors. One refuses honest self-assessment, living in denial about character and consequences; the other, facing the truth, sinks into despair as if grace could not reach it. The biblical way is to face ourselves truthfully and to bring what we find to the God whose grace redeems.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Honest reckoning with character, failures, and their consequences (Genesis 49:3–7).
- Scripture's truthfulness about its people, not airbrushed perfection (1 John 1:8).
- God's grace able to redeem even our failures (as with the tribe of Levi).
- Facing ourselves truthfully and bringing what we find to redeeming grace.

Discussion Prompts

- How honest were Jacob's words over his sons?
- How do honest self-assessment and God's grace belong together?
- How does the later redemption of Levi illustrate grace?

Question 4

Student Question:

How honestly do you face the truth about your own character, including your failures and their consequences? How can honest self-assessment and the hope of God's redeeming grace go together rather than cancel each other out?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses honest self-assessment into the student's life. We are all tempted to manage our self-image, excusing our failures, minimizing our faults, avoiding the truth about our character and the consequences of our choices.

Help students see that honest self-assessment is the path to growth, not a dead end. We cannot repent of or grow beyond what we refuse to acknowledge. Facing the truth about ourselves, in the light of God's word and Spirit, is the beginning of real change.

Hold out the hope of grace so honesty does not become despair. The point of facing our failures is not self-condemnation but to bring them to the God who forgives and redeems. Honest self-assessment and the hope of God's grace are not enemies; the more honestly we see our sin, the more we marvel at the grace that covers and transforms it.

Invite a concrete step: an area where the student needs to face the truth about their character and its consequences more honestly, and how they can bring that honest reckoning to God in confidence of His redeeming grace.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Honest self-assessment as the path to growth.
- We cannot repent of or grow beyond what we refuse to face.
- Facing failures to bring them to grace, not to despair.
- Honesty about sin deepening our wonder at grace.

Discussion Prompts

- How honestly do you face the truth about your own character?
- How can honest self-assessment and the hope of grace work together?
- What truth about yourself do you need to bring to God's grace?

Question 5

Student Question:

After Jacob's death, the brothers still feared Joseph's revenge, but Joseph reassured them, wept, and asked, "Am I in the place of God?" (50:15–21). What does this teach us about the completeness of true forgiveness and about not playing God as judge over those who have wronged us?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After Jacob's death, the brothers' old guilt and fear resurface: 'It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him' (50:15). They cannot quite believe his forgiveness was real; they assume that with their father gone, revenge will finally come. They even offer to be his slaves.

Joseph's response reveals the completeness of his forgiveness. He weeps that they still fear him, reassures them, and asks, 'Am I in the place of God?' (50:19). He refuses to take the role of judge and avenger; that belongs to God alone. His forgiveness was not a temporary truce but a settled reality, and he proves it by comforting and providing for them.

Draw out the completeness of true forgiveness. Real forgiveness does not hold the offense in reserve, waiting for a chance to settle the score; it releases the wrong fully and continues to do

good to the one forgiven. Joseph's question, 'Am I in the place of God?', is the key: we forgive because judgment belongs to God, not to us. 'Vengeance is mine, says the Lord' (Romans 12:19).

Address the brothers' lingering guilt as well. They struggled to receive a forgiveness that was freely and fully given. Many believers, likewise, keep punishing themselves for sins God has forgiven, unable to rest in grace. Joseph's reassurance pictures the fuller reassurance of God, who, having forgiven us in Christ, calls us to live free of the guilt He has removed.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The completeness of true forgiveness, not a truce holding the offense in reserve (Genesis 50:15–21).
- Refusing to play God as judge and avenger ('Am I in the place of God?').
- Leaving vengeance to God (Romans 12:19).
- Receiving God's forgiveness fully, not continuing to punish ourselves for forgiven sin.

Discussion Prompts

- Why did the brothers still fear Joseph after their father's death?
- What does Joseph's response reveal about complete forgiveness?
- What does 'Am I in the place of God?' teach us about judging?

Question 6

Student Question:

Do you carry lingering guilt over forgiven sin, or withhold full forgiveness from someone who has wronged you? How does Joseph's example free us both to receive forgiveness fully and to extend it completely?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies forgiveness, received and extended, to the student. It addresses two common struggles: carrying lingering guilt over forgiven sin, and withholding full forgiveness from those who have wronged us.

Help those who carry lingering guilt. Like the brothers who could not believe Joseph's grace, many believers keep replaying forgiven sins, unable to rest in God's pardon. But 'there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1). To keep punishing ourselves for what God has forgiven is to doubt the sufficiency of His grace. We are called to receive His forgiveness fully and live free.

Help those who withhold forgiveness. Like Joseph, we are called to forgive completely, not holding the offense in reserve, not waiting to settle the score, but releasing the wrong to God and continuing to do good. We can do this because judgment belongs to God and because we have ourselves been forgiven an immeasurable debt (Matthew 18:32–33).

Invite a concrete step: whether the student needs to receive God's forgiveness more fully for a sin they keep punishing themselves over, or to extend complete forgiveness to someone they have only partly forgiven, and one move toward that freedom.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Receiving God's forgiveness fully and living free of guilt (Romans 8:1).
- Extending complete forgiveness, not holding offenses in reserve.
- Forgiving because judgment is God's and we have been forgiven much (Matthew 18:32–33).
- Both self-condemnation and unforgiveness as failures to rest in grace.

Discussion Prompts

- Do you carry lingering guilt over a sin God has forgiven?
- Is there someone you have only partly forgiven?
- How does Joseph's example free you to receive and extend forgiveness fully?

Question 7

Student Question:

"You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive" (50:20). How does this verse hold together the reality of human evil and the sovereignty of God's good purpose, and how is the same pattern seen supremely at the cross (compare Acts 2:23)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Joseph's words in 50:20 are the capstone of the providence theme that has run through his whole story, and one of the most important verses in Genesis: 'As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive.' In a single sentence Joseph holds together the reality of human evil and the sovereignty of God's good purpose.

Stress that Joseph does not minimize the evil. He plainly says, 'you meant evil against me.' The betrayal was real sin, and the brothers were genuinely guilty; Joseph never pretends otherwise. At the same time, he sees that God was sovereignly at work through it all, intending good, the preservation of many lives. Both are fully true: real human evil, and real divine good purpose, woven together.

Teach the careful balance, the same one we saw earlier. God's sovereignty did not cancel the brothers' responsibility, and their sin did not thwart God's plan. We must reject the fatalism that uses God's good purpose to excuse evil ('God meant it for good, so it wasn't really sin'), and equally reject the despair that imagines evil has the final word. God redeems evil for good without ever authoring or approving it.

Anchor it once more in the cross, the supreme instance of the pattern. The greatest evil ever done, the crucifixion of the sinless Son of God, was both the guilty act of 'lawless men' and the 'definite plan and foreknowledge of God' for our salvation (Acts 2:23). What Joseph's brothers did in small, God overruled for the saving of a family; what wicked men did at Calvary, God overruled for the saving of the world. 'You meant evil... God meant good' finds its deepest fulfillment at the cross.

Land it in trust. This truth is meant to give the believer profound confidence: no evil done to us, no hardship we suffer, is outside God's power to redeem for good. 'We know that for those who love God all things work together for good' (Romans 8:28). We are not promised that every evil is good, but that God is able to bring good even out of evil, as He did for Joseph and supremely at the cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The capstone of providence: human evil and God's good purpose woven together (Genesis 50:20).
- Joseph affirming both the real evil ('you meant evil') and God's good intent ('God meant it for good').
- Rejecting both fatalism (excusing evil) and despair (evil having the final word).
- God redeeming evil for good without authoring or approving it.
- The cross as the supreme fulfillment of the pattern (Acts 2:23).
- Confidence that no evil or hardship is beyond God's power to redeem (Romans 8:28).

Discussion Prompts

- How does Joseph hold together human evil and God's good purpose?
- What two errors must we avoid in understanding this verse?
- How is the same pattern seen supremely at the cross?

Question 8

Student Question:

Where do you most need to trust that God is working good through hardship or wrong done to you, without pretending the wrong was not real? How does Joseph's perspective help you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies the providence of 50:20 to the student's own life. Each of us faces evils done to us and hardships we did not choose, and the temptation is either to be consumed by them or to deny their reality with forced positivity.

Help students take the honest, faith-filled middle path that Joseph models. We do not pretend the wrong was not real or that the pain does not hurt; Joseph called it evil. But we trust that

God is at work, even in and through the evil, to bring about good we may not yet see. Both honesty about the evil and trust in God's purpose are necessary.

Caution against trite application. We should not glibly tell a suffering person 'God meant it for good' as though that erased their pain. Joseph reached this perspective only after long years and great suffering. It is a hard-won trust, held with tears, not a slogan to dismiss grief. But it is true, and over time it can transform how we carry our wounds.

Invite reflection: where the student most needs to trust that God is working good through a hardship or wrong done to them, and how Joseph's perspective, honest about the evil yet confident in God's purpose, helps them carry it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Trusting God's good purpose through hardship without denying the wrong.
- Holding honesty about evil and trust in God's purpose together.
- A hard-won trust, not a glib slogan that dismisses grief.
- Joseph's perspective transforming how we carry our wounds over time.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you need to trust God is working good through a hardship?
- How do you avoid both despair and forced, dishonest positivity?
- How does Joseph's hard-won perspective help you carry your wounds?

Question 9

Student Question:

As he died, Joseph spoke by faith of God's certain future, "God will surely visit you and bring you up out of this land," and gave instructions about his bones, trusting a promise he would not live to see fulfilled (50:24–25; Hebrews 11:22). What does this teach us about a faith that looks beyond our own lifetime to God's faithful promises, and how does Genesis end in hope even with a coffin in Egypt?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the final doctrinal high point of the lesson and of the whole study: Joseph's dying faith. At the end of his life, Joseph speaks with confidence of a future he will not live to see: 'I am about to die, but God will surely visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob' (50:24). And he makes the people swear to carry his bones up when that day comes.

Draw out the nature of this faith. Joseph trusted God's promise for a fulfillment beyond his own lifetime. He would die in Egypt, but he was certain God would keep His word to bring the people back to the land. Hebrews singles this out: 'By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention

of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones' (Hebrews 11:22). His faith reached past his own grave to God's faithful future.

Note how Genesis ends: with a coffin in Egypt. The book that began with creation and a garden ends with an embalmed body in a foreign land. And yet it ends in hope, not despair, because that coffin holds a promise. Joseph's bones, kept and eventually carried to the Promised Land (Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32), were a standing testimony that God's story was not over, that redemption was still coming. The ending is unfinished on purpose; it leans forward toward the Exodus and, beyond it, toward Christ.

Gather up the whole sweep of Genesis. The book opened with creation, the fall, and the first promise that the offspring of the woman would crush the serpent (3:15). It narrowed the promise through Abraham's seed, through Judah's line, to the coming King, Shiloh. It displayed God's faithfulness through flawed people and hidden providence across generations. And it ends poised in hope, the promise alive, the line of the Messiah secured, the redemption still to come. Genesis is the opening chapter of a story that runs to the cross and the empty tomb and beyond.

Apply this faith that looks beyond our lifetime to the student. We too are called to trust God's promises for a future we may not live to see: the spread of His kingdom, the salvation of those we pray for, the final victory of Christ, and, beyond our own death, the resurrection and the new creation. Like Joseph, we can die in faith, certain that God will keep every word, and like him, we can spend our lives pointing those who come after us toward the redemption God has promised. The faith that holds God's promises beyond the grave is the faith that finishes well, and it rests on the God who, in Christ, has conquered death itself (1 Corinthians 15:20–26).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Joseph's dying faith in God's promise beyond his own lifetime (Genesis 50:24–25; Hebrews 11:22).
- Genesis ending with a coffin in Egypt, yet in hope, leaning toward redemption.
- Joseph's bones as a standing testimony that God's story was not over (Exodus 13:19; Joshua 24:32).
- The whole sweep of Genesis from creation and Genesis 3:15 to Judah's King, secured and still advancing.
- Trusting God's promises for a future we may not live to see, including the resurrection.
- A faith that finishes well, resting on the God who conquered death in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:20–26).

Discussion Prompts

- What future did Joseph trust God for as he died?
- Why does Genesis end with a coffin in Egypt, yet in hope?
- How does the whole story of Genesis lean forward toward Christ?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole book of Genesis, from creation and the fall to the promise of the offspring who would crush the serpent, to the line of Judah and the King to come. Name one specific way God has used this study of Genesis to form you and to draw you closer to Jesus.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Use this final capstone to gather not only this lesson but the entire study. Genesis has carried us from creation and the fall, through the flood and Babel, through the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, displaying God as Creator, Judge, covenant-keeper, and providential Redeemer, and pointing again and again toward Christ, the offspring of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the Lion of Judah.

Press for the specific and the personal. Ask students to look back over the whole study and name one concrete way God has used it to form them and draw them closer to Jesus: a truth that took root, a sin confronted, a comfort received, a hope renewed, a change begun. The goal of the whole study has never been merely more knowledge but transformation into the likeness of Christ.

Lift their eyes to the Christ to whom Genesis points. Every thread we have traced, the promised seed, the provided lamb, the suffering servant exalted to save, the King from Judah's line, finds its fulfillment in Jesus. To be formed by Genesis is finally to be drawn to Him, in whom all the promises of God find their yes (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Close with a forward look, fitting for the end of Genesis and the end of the study. Like Joseph, we hold God's promises in faith and point those who come after us toward the redemption God has secured in Christ and will yet complete. The story that began 'in the beginning, God created' moves toward a new creation, and we live now between the promise and its fulfillment, trusting the faithful God of Genesis, who has been our Shepherd and Redeemer, and who keeps every word.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Gathering the whole study: God as Creator, Judge, covenant-keeper, and Redeemer.
- Transformation into the likeness of Christ as the goal, not mere knowledge.
- Every thread of Genesis pointing to and fulfilled in Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20).
- Living between the promise and its fulfillment, trusting the faithful God of Genesis.

Discussion Prompts

- Looking over the whole study of Genesis, how has God used it to form you?
- How has this book drawn you closer to Jesus?

- How will you, like Joseph, hold God's promises in faith and point others toward them?