

VIEW FROM THE TOP

*Hints for the
Village Teacher*

LEADER'S GUIDE

edited by

Georgia Settle

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest privileges that God's children have is that of studying and teaching His Word. Therefore preparation for teaching should involve more than just reading the lesson. The teacher needs first to prepare her heart to receive God's truth and apply it to her life. This preparation must begin with prayer. As you approach each lesson, ask the Lord to teach it to you, to give you a sensitivity to His truth and to the needs of those whom you teach. Pray for each person in your circle or Bible study group by name asking the Lord to open her heart and mind to His Word.

Then begin your study by reading the Scripture portion several times. Take note of the context of the parable; what was happening? Who was involved? What prompted Jesus to tell the story? How does the parable speak to you personally? Does it make you think of any special person in your group?

Now read the chapter in the study book. Using this Leader's Guide, work through the questions. If your group has more than ten members, consider dividing into smaller groups to work on the questions. Divide the questions between the small groups and allow time for them to report on anything that had particular significance to them.

Most of these chapters contain more material than it is possible to cover in a usual session. Therefore it is very important that you plan ahead of time what you want to emphasize.

Go through the chapter and mark those portions on which you want to spend time. This will depend upon the background and interests of your group.

Be creative in finding ways to make these familiar stories come alive in your teaching. You will be well rewarded for the extra time that it may take as you see the interest and growth in the members of the group. We must never teach God's Word merely as an intellectual exercise, but we must pray expecting God to use His Word to change our lives and the lives of those we teach.

May God bless you in His glad service.

Georgia Settle
Editor

VIEW FROM THE TOP: "BUT GOD INTENDED IT"

Genesis 50

THEME: SOVEREIGNTY

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

Pray, Read, Pray, Study, Pray: Try to set aside a regular time for preparation and study. Then simply use that time to the best of your ability. The Christian life is always a matter of balance. Prayer and preparation produce results for the Kingdom. Preparation to lead a Bible lesson in the Body of Christ must not, however, provide an excuse to keep you from carrying out your regular, God-given responsibilities. The Lord has given you many uses for your time and gifts in this life, each of which must be seen in light of its peculiar biblical priority. Therefore, decide on the appropriate amount of time for preparation according to the "time of your life" and your responsibilities. Then use that time wisely, joyfully, and without guilt. Turn the whole procedure over to the Lord. You are seeking to lead His people into a clearer understanding of His Word. It is His project. Do your best, considering all the desires He has for your life; He will bless.

Pray for specifics. The whole process is front-line spiritual warfare. Spiritual weapons prevail.

Working through the Discussion Questions

Whether you've marked your Bible or not, cap off your personal reading and studying by working through the discussion questions. Here are a few insights that may be of help:

- Q. 4b:** There are probably a couple of good answers to this one. First, Pharaoh had grown to appreciate Joseph's character and truthfulness. In addition, however, Joseph was leaving his children and wealth in Egypt, something Moses and the people would not agree to do at a later date!
- Q. 5a:** Joseph believed in the promises of God.
- Q. 6b:** I would know that a practice run had been accomplished before.
- Q. 7:** The land did not yet belong to Israel and his progeny, except by promise. All but a very small fraction was firmly in the hands of the heathen clans of Canaan.
- Q. 10:** I'm not sure of the answer to this one. It certainly would be convenient for the brothers to lie at this point.
- Q. 12a:** Forgiveness.
- Q. 12b:** No other way!

Q. 13 end: (What did God intend?) He intended, at least in part, for His glory to shine forth in mortal man.

Q. 15: The word "sovereign" is beginning to have its meaning "watered down" in modern American English. You may wish to discuss the changes in its connotation so as to be able to consider the biblical truth of God's sovereignty, as seen in this 50:20 key verse and throughout Scripture.

Going through these questions—especially if you get to questions 13–15—can possibly issue in a very special and maybe life-changing prayer time. If you are dealing with a group that is not ready to warm up to such an exercise on the first lesson, you may try to return to this set of questions (9–15) at a carefully chosen point later on in the series of lessons. Helping a friend move from a desire for revenge (the answer to Q.9) to a gentle resting in the sovereignty of the Lord is a wonderful gift and ministry.

Preparation of Practicalities

MEMORY VERSE CARDS: You want each member of the group to have a memory verse card for Genesis 50:20, so they will be able to tape it to their mirror, stick it to the refrigerator, or hang it over the kitchen sink. We'll take a page from the Navigators' notebook, for they are experts in encouraging Scripture memory.

The card should have a "Topic" in the upper left-hand corner. The topic could be "GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY" or "VIEW FROM THE TOP" or "KEY VERSE FOR JOSEPH." The topic should be a convenient "handle" to make it easy for them to return to the truth of these powerful words when the need arises in their own lives or in the lives of their loved ones.

Under the topic, the reference should be written. Then simply copy the verse from your Bible. In the lower right-hand corner of the card, re-write the reference. In all recitation and practice, the topic, the reference, the verse, and the reference again should be given in that order. It works!

HOW TO GET THE MEMORY CARDS MADE: You could write them out ahead of time. You could run them off on a computer or an office copier. I would suggest that you let each lady make her own, right there in the Bible study. Just provide the materials.

HOW TO TEACH THE MEMORY VERSE: I would suggest the tried and true "Disappearing Verse Trick." If you have a chalk board, white dry-erase marker board, flip chart, or even a piece of meat-wrapping paper you could tape to the mantelpiece, use something like that. If you are working with a group of two or three around a table, you could use a piece of notebook paper. Of course, an overhead projector works best. If you cannot figure any "central" way to have the memory verse held before the group, then give each person *two* note cards, one to take home for the mirror and the other to destroy through this learning process in the meeting.

Now... have the group *read* the memory verse aloud together: topic, reference, verse, and reference again. Turn to the person on your left and ask them to pick out a word or number. Mark out that word or number on your display. (If each student has their own note card, have everyone scratch out the chosen word beyond recognition.) Read the verse aloud for the second time, supplying the scratched-out word now from memory! Ask the second person on your left to supply another word or number; and repeat the process. Continue until nothing is left on the board or on the cards. When the group "reads" the verse the final time, it will be from memory!

This *takes time*, but I believe it to be well worth the effort. In the midst of laughter, it completely overcomes the defense that "I can't memorize." Each participant is well on the way to success by the time your chart becomes an unrelieved mess!

Blame this whole procedure on me. Let your group know that you are "only following the teacher's guide!" I have tried this approach with all age groups and in many, many situations. It always develops interest, laughter, and amazement. If you stumble over part of the verse, don't worry. It will only cause your group to enjoy the process more.

SINGING (OR READING WORDS TO SONGS): You may find singing to be a good beginning and/or ending exercise. For Lesson One, two appropriate songs would be:

"Come Thou Fount of Ev'ry Blessing" and

"My Lord Knows the Way through the Wilderness: (All I Have to Do is Follow)."

In "Come Thou Fount," you will want to emphasize the Eben-ezer imagery. "Eben" means "stone of;" "ezer" means "help." (The reference is to 1 Samuel 7:12.)

HELPFUL CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

CC Q. 3: *Why did God make you and all things?*

A.: For his own glory.

CC Q.12: *Does God know all things?*

A.: Yes; nothing can be hid from God.

CC Q.13: *Can God do all things?*

A.: Yes; God can do all his holy will.

WSC Q. 1: *What is the chief end of man?*

A.: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

WSC Q. 7: *What are the decrees of God?*

A.: The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

WSC Q. 8: *How doth God execute His decrees?*

A.: God executeth his decrees in the works of creation and providence.

HELPFUL RESEARCH MATERIAL: *From Forgiven to Forgiving*, by Jay E. Adams, a book dealing with the important difference between shuffling your feet, mumbling "Sorry," and asking forgiveness for clearly admitted sin.

HELPFUL QUOTE: Henry Elrod was clerk of session at Second Presbyterian Church in Greenville, S.C., during much of the time I worked with the youth of the congregation. Just prior to each morning worship service, Henry would close our prayer time with the same words. He would entreat the Lord, "And at last, save us and receive us into heaven, for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son." Over a period of months and years, Henry lifted my eyes from the next devotional at the gym or the next youth retreat to a very long range "view from the top." I owe much to his example; I look forward to joining him again, by God's grace, at the Summit.

ANCESTORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Genesis 35

THEME: COVENANT

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

As you pray for this lesson, list your expected participants by name and pray for them one by one. As surprising as it may seem from the title of this lesson, it is here that you have a made-for-evangelism opportunity. Pray for each individual to have made a clear, life-long commitment to the Savior by the end of this lesson. Also pray for those you do not really expect to come. In both cases, you may be asking for miracles—and you are going to the right place!

Working Through the Discussion Questions

Q. 1: Abraham :: Isaac :: Jacob :: Joseph and brothers

“Jacob” means “the Grabber” or “the Deceiver” or “the One Who Trips Others.” For an account of his birth and the human reason for the choice of his name, see Genesis 25:19ff.

Q. 3: Jacob had been running for his life, having cheated his brother Esau out of his birthright and his blessing. As a deceiver, Jacob met his match in his father-in-law Laban. In order to keep from being cheated beyond measure, Jacob had to flee from Paddan Aram with his life, his wives, his children, and his possessions.

Q. 4: This, of course, is the story of “Jacob’s Ladder,” which probably looked much more like a stair-stepped pyramid (or “ziggurat”) than a modern extension ladder. At any rate, we learn from John 1:51 that the true “Ladder,” “upon Whom” the messengers of God ascend carrying prayers to heaven and return with answers from on high, is Jesus Christ Himself!

Q. 5b: The Lord is referring to the paramount importance of His covenant with Jacob’s father and grandfather, as Jacob begins to learn of the matchless grace that was reaching even such a deceiver as himself! Along with Jacob, we begin to learn of the might of His faithfulness.

Q. 6: “Beth” means “house of.”
 “El” is a shortened form of “Elohim;” both words mean “God.”
 As “Beth-lehem” means “House of Bread,” so “Beth-El” means “House of God.”

NOTE: We have the record of God’s actually having met with Jacob some *seven times* during his lifetime.

Q.12: 1 John 4:19 and 4:10

John 6:44

God *initiates* the relationship with sinful, fallen men, dead in their trespasses and sins, "living" at enmity with their Creator (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 5:8).

Q.15: This is the entry point for your asking whether each person in the room has responded to the love of God. Using the "Romans Road" might be a good approach:

Romans 3:23 All have sinned.

Romans 6:23 With our sin, we have *earned* eternal death (separation from God).

Romans 5:8 In spite of our enmity, Christ died in order to save His people.

Acts 16:30, 31 What to do? Believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

1 John 1:8, 9 God *promises* to forgive our sins and to cleanse us in His sight!

I know that these are not all from Romans, but I hope that they are easy to understand and to present. You may have a tract or some other presentation of the simple message of salvation.

It would be wonderful if every student were able to say whether they have entered into a covenant relationship with God or not! There might be a beautiful variety among those who are the first to come to the Lord in their family in recent memory, those who come from covenant families for generations, and those who would be ready to make the commitment before the Bible study is over!

Preparation of Practicalities

ATMOSPHERE: See if you can find a tape or CD of the song "Find Us Faithful," and have it playing as your group gathers. "Amazing Grace" and "How Firm a Foundation" could also be used as a musical introduction to some of the topics covered in the lesson. In fact, a Highland bagpipers' rendition of "Amazing Grace" would be a very good choice.

PREPARE MEMORY VERSE REVIEW: The Navigators' charge for effective memory work is, "Review, review, review." In addition, a clear trait of human nature is that you can only "expect what you inspect." Of course, don't put individuals on the spot and don't run anybody off. Turn it into a funny "surprise" and work on it together, but go over Genesis 50:20 enough for any new people to pick up on it.

ASK FOR A TESTIMONY: As you are preparing, ask someone ahead of time to plan to share how she became a Christian and whether she comes from a long line of believers like Charles Wenger or whether she has had to "stem the tide" like Joe Novenson. This could break the ice for others at the appropriate time and involve several more in sharing. You could hold this preparation in abeyance until close to the end, even skipping some of the questions in order to get to question 15.

SINGING: "Amazing Grace," "Just as I Am,"
"How Firm a Foundation," and/or
"I Sought the Lord, and Afterward I Knew"

HELPFUL CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

CC Q.22: *What is a covenant?*

A.: An agreement between two or more persons.

CC Q.23: *What covenant did God make with Adam?*

A.: The covenant of works.

CC Q.27: *Did Adam keep the covenant of works?*

A.: No; he sinned against God.

CC Q.43: *With whom did God the Father make the covenant of grace?*

A.: With Christ, his eternal Son.

CC Q.44: *Whom did Christ represent in the covenant of grace?*

A.: His elect people.

CC Q.55: *Who will be saved?*

A.: Only those who repent of sin, believe in Christ, and lead holy lives.

WSC Q.20: *Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?*

A.: God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.

HELPFUL RESEARCH MATERIALS: *All of Grace*, by Charles Spurgeon; *Covenants: God's Way with His People*, by O. Palmer Robertson (Great Commission Publications, 1988); *What Did I Say?*, by Glen McClung.

HELPFUL SENTIMENT/"QUOTE": The desire of my wife Ruth's heart is the theme that "those who come behind us *find us faithful*."

PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS

Start the meeting time by holding up, pointing out, or passing around something representative of a contract or covenant: wedding ring, wedding license, mortgage, key to safe deposit box where your last will and testament is kept, etc.

Start the prayer time by asking each member to share the salutary influence of someone in their lives. It would be preferable to share about a parent, grandparent, or family member. On the other hand, the major spiritual directions in their lives may have come through a school teacher, principal, neighbor, or tele-evangelist. Graciously receive all contributions, but do not force anyone to share. If they are in your Bible study group, it is likely that the Lord has brought some human being—maybe sitting in your midst—to bring His Word to bear on their life. You could mix the question with a getting-to-know-you "game." You might say, "I'd like to ask everyone to share two things about yourself: (1) your favorite wildflower, and (2) someone in your family or community who has influenced you spiritually." Such an approach, with a genuine commitment to appreciate each participant's response, should be easily received.

VIEW FROM THE BOTTOM

*G*enesis 37

THEME: HUMILIATION

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

It is not impossible that some of your Bible students are enamored of the idea that God's great desire for their lives is ever-growing prosperity and prevention of pain. This chapter could be a shock to them. You need to pray about its impact and effectiveness in meeting a direct need.

Closer to home, many of us probably secretly wish that the "prosperity gospel" really were true. We need to pray for ourselves. We have such a hard time seeing past the visible!

Working through the Discussion Questions

Most of the answers to the discussion questions this time are directly related to the marking suggestions.

- Q. 8:** You do *not* want to get sidetracked into debating a popular view that God leads today's Christian through dreams and visions. Without proper preparation, you could be backed into a corner by someone's trying to say that Joseph's dream experiences validate some strange event that happened to a relative of theirs in the past month!

The way to prepare is to study Hebrews 1:1-2 and to study the opening sections of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. The point to emphasize is that special revelation comes from God to us and that we must be able to recognize it and to respond to it appropriately. *Before* the Bible was completed, God used dreams, visions, prophecies, etc., as part of His normal means of special revelation. Today, since Jesus has come, since the explanation of His completed work has been so fully given in the New Testament, and since we have also been given plenty of information to get us ready for the Second Coming, He doesn't need to use the dream approach anymore. He uses the Bible. Suggestions of His leading through visions, feelings, and so-called angel mediaries have much more to do with New Age incursions into the Church than Bible-based thinking.

- QQ.4-15:** Many of these questions should provide for lively discussion. Varied responses to the same question may often be easily within the realm of possibility. The impact of this interchange of ideas should be to "enter into" some of the interpersonal dynamics of the family of Jacob prior to Joseph's expulsion.
- Q. 16:** Do not leave this one out. This is the opportunity for a summary of the teaching and a springboard for personal application.

Preparation of Practicalities

MEMORY VERSE CARDS: I would recommend a review of Genesis 50:20. You might try the "Ping Pong Ball" approach of Child Evangelism Fellowship, in which you divide the group into two "sides." The first side gives the topic, thereby "serving the ball/verse" to the others. The second side gives the reference. The first side recites the first word of the verse; the second side gives the second word. They alternate until one side completes the process with the closing reference. You can do it over and over, speeding up the lobbies each time. You can also switch to let the second side "serve."

If your group seems to enjoy this memory work adventure, you might try repeating the "disappearing verse" process using Romans 8:28. Its personal impact on the believer's life is very similar to that of Genesis 50:20. We learned the O.T. verse in our study of the "view from the top." It would be appropriate to learn the N.T. equivalent as we consider the "view from the bottom." If you do work on Romans 8:28, you may want to use the KJV, since several in your group may have already learned it in that version in years past.

PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS

Start the meeting time with a general discussion of whether any of your group have heard anyone present a "prosperity gospel" or give a "God wants you rich" spiel. This will let you know what is ahead of you. My questions will be forcing you to lead to the biblical answers. Depend on the Spirit to bear witness by and with the Scriptures in the hearts of those present.

SINGING: "And Can It Be That I Should Gain"
(#455 in the *New Trinity Hymnal*)
A Scripture-song version of Philippians 3:10, like "I Want to Know Christ"

HELPFUL CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

CC Q. 45: *What did Christ undertake in the covenant of grace?*

A.: To keep the whole law for his people, and to suffer the punishment due to their sins.

CC Q. 47: *How could the Son of God suffer?*

A.: Christ, the Son of God, became man that he might obey and suffer in our nature.

WSC Q. 23: *What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer?*

A.: Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of *humiliation* and exaltation.

WSC Q. 27: *Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?*

A.: *Christ's humiliation* consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

HELPFUL RESEARCH MATERIAL: Chapter 1, Paragraph 1, of *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. In summary, the section says that natural revelation is clear enough to declare the existence of a Creator, but is not clear enough to declare Who the Savior is or how to be saved. Special revelation is needed to tell us of God's will for our lives. Before His will for us was committed "wholly unto writing" in the written Word, there were many ways used by the Lord to declare His will to His people. Since the completion of the writing, however, these declarations "at sundry times and in divers manners" are now "ceased." *Therefore, Bible study is of the utmost importance.* Waiting around for a visiting spirit to help you understand what God wants you to do is, at best, unnecessary. At worst, it is terribly dangerous.

HELPFUL QUOTE:

My Grace Is Sufficient for Thee

All unseen the Master walketh
By the toiling servant's side;
Comfortable words He speaketh,
While His hands uphold and guide.

Grief, nor pain, nor any sorrow
Rends thy heart, to Him unknown;
He today, and He tomorrow,
Grace sufficient gives His own.

Holy strivings nerve and strengthen,
Long endurance wins the crown;
When the evening shadows lengthen,
Thou shalt lay thy burden down.
— Author Unknown

DISGUISE OF THE WORLDLY WISE

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Genesis 38

THEME: SEPARATION (and SACRAMENTS)

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

If you thought prayer for Chapter Three was a challenge, just wait until you enter the fray for souls in preparation for this chapter. Whereas, in presenting Genesis 37 we wanted to provide a clear opportunity to respond to the Gospel for the first time, we hope to stir the souls of complacent believers through a study of Genesis 38. To get a glimpse of Judah in our own mirror should, following this study, shake us to our core.

My first few paragraphs may elicit a little heat and consternation. If so, the tip of the iceberg has been sighted. Worldliness—and an intentional running after and “baptizing” concepts and practices of worldliness—is rampant in the Church for whom Christ died. If we would only concentrate on the intended effects of our baptism upon us, marking us off from the world, commissioning us to go out and turn the world upside down for the cause of Christ! Then we would not be so accommodating, so apt to assimilate the world’s newest and brightest heathen concepts and paradigms! Oh, that we would not fall for sham! Oh, that we would not be so eager to be confused by statistics and trends! Oh, that we would be transformed, not conformed!

Pray, read, pray, study, pray. The enemy of our souls did not like the message to fence-sitters in the last lesson. Neither will he approve of the challenges to “hidden” holiness in this one.

Working through the Discussion Questions

- Q. 2b:** I really do not want to put this information in the study guide, for I would rather that you and your fellowship partners dig for a while. I think “trick” questions liven up discussions and can be used to bond believers together. On the other hand, in testing this question, some ladies spent more than two hours trying to track down the answer. Her name is not given.
- QQ. 8&9:** I don’t think any of these questions are difficult. Questions 8 and 9 should allow for the expression of many varied sentiments, which is very helpful in Bible study discussion.
- Q. 10:** This little series of questions is the key to the study. Judah says, “She is more righteous than I.” He is recognizing more than the seal and cord and staff. He is *recognizing* his sin. What is he *doing*? With a rather minimal use of words, Judah is *repenting*! Our only hope for ourselves or our progeny does not rely in our being sinless, but in our knowing what to do with our sins. Judah takes a small step back away from the worldliness around and within him; he responds to God’s call through Tamar by taking a step toward home.
- QQ.11-15:** Try to get into these questions. Try to stir up discussion. Maybe send the group off in pairs to deal with this important call to repentance. The study has the great possibility of stepping squarely on the toes of your friends! Praise the Lord for any success. If you run into any glitches, blame them on me.

Preparation of Practicalities

PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS:

Start the meeting time with a visually stimulating, exciting illustration! I give a number of possibilities. Use your imagination and the resources available to you. This lesson could become one of the most memorable your group has ever experienced. (If you choose option #5, someone in your group may eventually write you up for *Reader's Digest* as their most unforgettable character!) A key to this memory "handle" will be your opening salvo, followed by the careful study of the heartbreak of Judah's flirtation with a worldly end.

The idea is *not* for you to do all of these. Pick and choose:

- (1) Ask a hunter to come dressed in camouflage and then actually apply the black and green make-up to his face, as he explains his purpose. While he is still with you, discuss the way we all apply "makeup" every day. Discuss similarities and differences in expectation and in intended "success!" Then dismiss him with thanks and some early refreshments.
- (2) Set up a T.V./VCR to play a segment of a nature video (*National Geographics*, etc.) showing the effectiveness of camouflage in God's creation.
- (3) Pass around photos of natural camouflage from a biology text or some other book.
- (4) Pass around a catalogue that advertises hunters' camouflaged outerwear.
- (5) Begin the lesson wearing a see-through camouflaged head covering, an item often used in turkey hunting!

Start the prayer time, hopefully following the Bible study itself, by referring to the camouflage concept and by asking each participant to share with a prayer partner (person on their right) how they seek to camouflage their Christianity in practical ways from day to day. This could be very effective.

RECORDING OR VIDEO TO BE PLAYED AT TIME OF REFRESHMENTS:

EITHER: The first landing on the moon, from an original or from a 25th anniversary presentation: "One small step for man...." Compare with the first step of the Christian out onto the slippery slope of worldliness.

OR: "Turn Your Heart Toward Home," by Steve and Annie Chapman.

MEMORY VERSE(S): Nothing new. Expect only what you inspect.

SINGING: "This Little Light of Mine"
(with the old Bible school motions!)
"I Have Decided"
(traditional or Amy Grant version)

HELPFUL CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

CC Q.122: *How many sacraments are there?*

A.: Two.

CC Q.123: *What are they?*

A.: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

CC Q.124: *Who appointed these sacraments?*

A.: The Lord Jesus Christ.

CC Q.125: *Why did Christ appoint these sacraments?*

A.: To distinguish his disciples from the world, and to comfort and strengthen them.

WSC Q. 94: *What is Baptism?*

A.: Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

HELPFUL RESEARCH MATERIAL:

Two approaches:

- (1) to study the sections of the Confession given below, and
- (2) to evaluate any popular material you can find on how to make the Church successful in our modern age. Work through an issue or two on your own. In following well-meaning advice, would we be simply using our common sense based on how the Lord made the created world—or—would we be caving in to the non-ethical, anti-God worldliness all around us?

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XVI, "Of Good Works," Sections 1 and 2:

1. Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy Word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intention.
2. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers *manifest their thankfulness*, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, *adorn the profession of the gospel*, *stop the mouths of the adversaries*, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.

5

SECURITY OF PURITY

G^{enesis} 39

THEME: CONSECRATION

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

This lesson is as simple and straight forward as you could imagine. The narrative text is one of those “famous” passages of Scripture. Many of your Bible study group have known the details of the story almost all their lives. Do we really need to spend time on chapter 39?

Pour your prayer into this gap: the difference between knowing the story and living the life. My guess is that you and I and all those who study this lesson need to be *encouraged* to a life of purity and integrity. Hopefully, our having considered Judah in chapter 38 will *discourage* us from hypocrisy, duplicity, and deceit. How happy to dig in a well-known story of practical holiness and to encourage one another through it along the path of life! Pray for that simple, powerful effect on all your friends.

Working through the Discussion Questions

Q. 4: “Im-” means “with;” “anu-” means “us.” Once again, “El” is a shortened form of the word “Elohim,” which means “God.”

The “Immanuel Principle” is an extremely important thread throughout the fabric of Scripture. As you would expect, it is closely related to the interpersonal God-to-man and man-to-God covenantal commitment, which provides much of the structure of the biblical message.

You will probably want to have someone read Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23 aloud. You may ask whether anyone remembers the two Psalms and the chapter of Hebrews mentioned in Chapter Five of the book emphasizing God’s constant presence with His people. Don’t breeze by this concept; it is important.

Q. 6a: Trick question. Information not given in text.

Q. 7: Not difficult to answer. May be very enjoyable for your group to “excavate” this comparison on their own.

Q. 9a: See my explanation in the book: he fled!

Q. 14: Main application question.

Q. 15: The growth—training in righteousness question.

Throughout the question and answer time, be aware of the temptation simply to say, "See Joseph. See Joseph run. Run, Joseph, run. Now, people, go ye and do likewise." This is moralism. This is putting trust in a human. The human will let you down every time.

NOTE: We shall deal with this issue more fully in Chapter Seven, as we work through Genesis 41.

Preparation of Practicalities

PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS:

Start the meeting time with a joke:

What is the smallest animal in the Bible?

A.: The wicked flea. (See Proverbs 28:1, KJV.)

Part of the lasting import of this study is that there are times for the godly person to flee and there are times to remain immovable. To state it more clearly: even as Joseph *fled* from temptation, he did not budge in his relationship with God. He did not flee as the wicked flee. He did not worry as the wicked worry. He did not run away from the results of a wicked reputation; he fled temptation in order to continue a life of purity before God.

If you want to lead into the "wicked flea" joke, you could warm up your group with a series of equally ancient queries:

How did God stop Adam and Eve from gambling?

A.: God took away their pair-o'-dice.

Who was the first lady to smoke cigarettes in the Bible?

A.: Rebecca; it says in Genesis 24:64 that "she lighted off the camel."

Here's one of my favorites:

How did Pharaoh's daughter survive the Depression?

A.: She got a little prophet (profit) from the rushes on the bank!

HELPFUL CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

(For the purpose of focusing on Christ as our example and to begin to prepare to discuss the problems of moralism in Chapter Seven):

CC Q.45: *What did Christ undertake in the covenant of grace?*

A.: To keep the whole law for his people, and to suffer the punishment due to their sins.

CC Q.46: *Did our Lord Jesus Christ ever commit the least sin?*

A.: No; he was holy, harmless, and undefiled.

CC Q.103: *Can any man keep these ten commandments perfectly?*

A.: No mere man, since the fall of Adam, ever did or can keep the ten commandments perfectly.

WSC Q.82: *Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?*

A.: No mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed.

SINGING: A hymn based on Psalm 46, such as "God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength"

(#37 in *Trinity Hymnal*; #40 in *New Trinity Hymnal*, or Psalm 46 from a Psalter/Bible Songs Book)

EVALUATING WAITING

*G*enesis 40

THEME: SANCTIFICATION

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

Consider Lesson Six a respite. This is heart-to-heart time. Hopefully, your group has laughed and discussed (argued?) and fellowshiped together enough to be prepared to share long-term prayer requests.

Pray for openness. Pray for gentleness. The content questions are easy to answer; the study has only one main point. Pray that the prayer time would exceed all expectations.

Preparation of Practicalities

PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS:

Start the meeting time with a bang. If you can pull off this suggested opening, you will give a very memorable illustration of frustration, you will get everybody (or almost everybody) laughing, and you will prepare the way for serious one-on-one sharing later on.

Secure a golf ball, a putter, a yardstick, and a "hole" or "cup" (something into which it is possible to putt a ball in your living room, Sunday school room, Shoney's floor space, or wherever you are holding your meetings).

For your opening, ask for volunteers to try to knock the ball into the cup. Try to get three volunteers, including only one true golfer. Hopefully, contestant #1 and contestant #2 will both miss the "hole." Be sure the most capable golfer is last. Stand near the cup, directing the whole show, yardstick in hand. Encourage the golfer to take her time, lining up her shot to the best of her ability, for she will not be given a second try. *Then*, as she takes her shot and the ball is on the way to the cup, *drop* the yardstick carefully and deliberately across the path of the golfball. The ball should veer rapidly off to the side. The better the shot, the better the effect. Now, look into the golfer's face. What have you caused? Pure, unadulterated *frustration!* You may also have called forth a few other emotions. Your group will never forget!

Explain—probably with your arm around your victim, after you have the potential weapon safely back in your possession—that a desired goal was in the process of being accomplished and the yardstick "got in the way" of reaching the goal. This is the picture of frustration. This is the story of Joseph, unwritten, between the last verse of chapter 39 and the first verse of chapter 40. If you survive the opening illustration without wearing a club wrapped around your cranium, the rest of the meeting will be a breeze. Again, blame it all on me. I tried this on one of our elders while I taught this lesson in our living room. I survived, but I'll never forget the look on Jack's face!

Start the prayer time, following the Bible study itself and before any refreshment time, simply by assigning groups of two or three to work on questions 12 through 15. In other words, break up into small groups as soon as you finish answering question 11.

View from the Top

SINGING: "The Lord Will Provide"
(#79 *Trinity Hymnal*; #95 *New Trinity Hymnal*)

HELPFUL CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

CC Q.105: *What is prayer?*

A.: Prayer is asking God for things which he has promised to give.

CC Q.116: *What is the fourth petition?*

A.: "Give us this day our daily bread."

CC Q.117: *What do we pray for in the fourth petition?*

A.: That God would give us all things needful for our bodies and souls.

WSC Q. 98: *What is prayer?*

A.: Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.

WSC Q.104: *What do we pray for in the fourth petition?*

A.: In the fourth petition, (which is, Give us this day our daily bread,) we pray, that of God's free gift, we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.

HELPFUL RESEARCH MATERIALS:

Psalm 136

James 1

A study in the concept of "importunity" in prayer, *a la* the "importunate" or "persistent" widow of Luke 18.

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter V, "Of Providence," Sections 1, 3, & 5:

1. God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, *from the greatest even to the least*, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.
3. God, in His ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at His pleasure.
5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave, for a season, His own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, *that they may be humbled*; and, to raise them to a *more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself*, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.

MEMORY VERSES: Can your group still recite Genesis 50:20 or 8:28?

EXPECTATION OF EXALTATION

Genesis 41

THEME: TYPES and the ANTOTYPE

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

Pray for the learning curve for this Bible study. There is more to *learn* in this lesson than in other chapters. Although the questions do emphasize a certain amount of observed detail, the points to be grasped deal with a major aspect of how each individual approaches Scripture.

We alluded to the subject in the Leader's Guide for Chapter Five. Now the material is openly explained for everyone in the fellowship group. Assimilating this material may require life-long Bible students to re-examine how they have taught the story of Abraham, the story of Ruth, the story of Esther, and the story of Jonah all these years! The exercise will turn out to be a great blessing. Preaching and teaching Christ from all parts of the inspired Word can easily be demonstrated to be the biblical approach. My hesitation is in recognizing that many believers have simply never been challenged in this area. One of the results is that our children graduate from Sunday school thinking that their main goal is to be good enough, moral enough, Daniel-like enough to get a ticket to heaven. No! It is worth the stretching that may occur in your class! Our salvation is *only* in Christ! The message of the Bible—*in toto*—is Jesus!

Pray for seeing eyes, hearing ears, soft hearts.

Working through the Discussion Questions

- Q. 2b:** See *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chapter III, Section I, quoted at the end of these suggestions, for the terminology of "second causes" or secondary causes used by the Almighty to carry out His purposes for His own glory.
- Q. 2c:** Trick question. Hope it won't really trick anyone. There is no such thing as luck.
- Q. 3c:** See verse 32.
- Q. 9c:** The Hebrew names are important because they are explicit statements of Joseph's implicit faith in the faithfulness of God to His covenant promises!
- Q. 12:** This question is important. It is the test, and it is the opportunity to try out this potentially "new" idea. As the group works through these two questions, they will be "doing theology" in first-hand experience. The way to figure how to preach or teach on David, leader of the kingly line; Moses, preeminent earthly prophet; and Levi, father of the chosen line of priests; is to work through these two questions. How is the person (or institution or event) *like* Christ? How is he or it *unlike* the Savior? In the cases of the three men above, all three were murderers! Surely, we don't want to tell our children simply to study them and do likewise!

Nor do we want to mumble our way through parts of Scripture that are potentially embarrassing to our approach. By teaching Christ—*always and only*—teaching Christ, we won't be caught preaching Levi or Esther or even John the Baptist!

If you have plenty of time *and* if your group is getting interested in the subject, simply have them turn over to the book of Hebrews and ferret out example after example. An important point of Hebrews is to look at many people and items in the O.T. and to declare—always—that Jesus is *better!* Compare and contrast. Deepen an appreciation of the Antitype. Preach/teach only the Real Thing!

Preparation of Practicalities

ATMOSPHERE: Try playing either Judy Rogers' *Why Can't I See God* tape (especially the part teaching Prophet, Priest and King information) or Handel's *Messiah*. Although two very different approaches, either would be quite appropriate for the subjects to be covered.

MEMORY: Expect what you inspect. Have you been inspecting anything? Do you expect the members of your class to be able to come away from the Joseph study with Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28 memorized or not?

SINGING: Find any hymn(s) dealing with Christ's Exaltation. In the *Trinity Hymnal*, the primary section is #214 through #219. In the *New Trinity Hymnal*, it is #295 through #302.

HELPFUL CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

CC Q. 51: *What is sanctification?*

A.: It is God's making sinners holy in heart and conduct.

CC Q. 64: *What offices has Christ?*

A.: Christ has three offices.

CC Q. 65: *What are they?*

A.: The offices of prophet, priest, and of a king.

CC Q. 66: *How is Christ a prophet?*

A.: Because he teaches us the will of God.

CC Q. 67: *How is Christ a priest?*

A.: Because he died for our sins and pleads with God for us.

CC Q. 68: *How is Christ a king?*

A.: Because he rules over us and defends us.

CC Q. 69: *Why do you need Christ as a prophet?*

A.: Because I am ignorant.

CC Q. 70: *Why do you need Christ as a priest?*

A.: Because I am guilty.

CC Q. 71: *Why do you need Christ as a king?*

A.: Because I am weak and helpless.

WSC Q. 28: *Wherein consisteth Christ's exaltation?*

A.: Christ's exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

WSC Q. 35: *What is sanctification?*

A.: Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed, in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

WSC Q. 37: *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?*

A.: The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves, till the resurrection.

WSC Q. 38: *What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?*

A.: At the resurrection, believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

HELPFUL RESEARCH MATERIAL:

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter III, "Of God's Eternal Decree," Section 1:

1. God from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; *nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.*

8

HEARING THE LONG-HAUL CALL

Genesis 42 and 43

THEME: EFFECTUAL CALLING

DO NOT SKIP THIS CHAPTER. If, for some reason, a chapter has to be missed, do not let this be the one to slip through the cracks!

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

Here I go a-meddlin' again. This one will hit believers and inquirers alike. It may even spawn thoughts of an evil alliance against the God Who is there. The message of this chapter attacks all the unwarranted self-reliance of all daughters of Eve and sons of Adam. Watch out.

Obviously, throw yourself into the preparation—especially into the preparation of prayer.

Working through the Discussion Questions

- Q. 2C:** In the final analysis, it should be obvious that God Almighty caused the extensive famine.
- Q. 4:** Remember the relationships of the four women to the one man Jacob: two wives and two concubines. Joseph and Benjamin were the only sons of the beloved Rachel.
- Q. 7:** This question is quite important. It should be helpful in trying to “enter into” the emotions beginning to be experienced by the brothers.
- Q. 8:** Answering this question requires the student to help formulate the categories. It may be asking too much. It would require some time spent in meditation and concentration; it would not be something you could answer on your way out the door to the Bible study.

Category Two would deal with *intentional* references to Joseph by his brothers and father, using such terms as “his brother” as well as his name. (This can be uncovered more easily if students have worked through the “Mark Your Bible” section on this one.)

Category Three, then, would deal with *unintentional* references to Joseph, as his family members call him “the man” in charge of the grain exchange in Egypt.

- Q. 9:** Isn't this a nightmare?!
- Q. 10:** Trick question. God has always been “there!” How would He not have been there? Does He have to be “invited” into the picture of Genesis 42 and 43? (We are approaching the main subject here.)

Q.12a: Trick question. There may be multitudinous “seeming” coincidences. There are no true “coincidences” in God’s universe.

Q.12b: Another trick question! What in the world is fair? Being sent straight to hell is fair for me—and for you. All else is mercy and grace!

Q.17: Another improper reference to coincidences!

Q.18: THIS IS IT. I hope you know the individuals in your group well enough now to figure how best to handle this “hot potato.” Simply going to question 18 right after question 17, as though nothing special were being asked, *should* bring forth embarrassed silence. If you want to handle it that way, you can pass over it and be done in a jiffy.

On the other hand, you probably have more than one of your friends in the room who are running away from the Lord (in some aspect of their lives) as hard as their legs will carry them. They may well have heard their Beloved, the Hound of Heaven. How will you arrange for them to respond? By twos and threes? By giving every individual a piece of stationery for a written personal response right there in the room? Would they be writing their hearts out for you to see? For only their prayer partner(s) to see? For no one to see at all? Use your creativity. I *encourage* you not to let the opportunity to make progress in this area pass you/them by.

Preparation of Practicalities

ATMOSPHERE: You may want to get a copy of Francis Thompson’s poem and read it all aloud. You may want to get the neighborhood English literature teacher to record it for you to play before the Bible study begins!

SINGING: Verse four of “And Can It Be?” (#455 in the *New Trinity Hymnal*):

Long my imprisoned spirit lay, fast bound
in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quick’ning ray;
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free;
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

Amazing love! How can it be
That thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

MINOR INSIGHTS: HESED has two short “eh” sounds; it begins with the sound one makes clearing his throat early on a pollen-laden spring morning. Pronouncing it with a normal “h” sound should, however, be quite sufficient. Accent is on the first syllable.

The Brothers Jaacobov is based on the three syllables in the Hebrew name “Ja-a-cob,” and is something of a takeoff on Doestoevski’s *The Brothers Karamazov*.

MOST HELPFUL AND IMPORTANT CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

WSC Q. 29: *How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?*

A.: We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by his Holy Spirit.

WSC Q. 30: *How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?*

A.: The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ *in our effectual calling*.

WSC Q. 31: *What is effectual calling?*

A.: *Effectual calling* is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

HELPFUL SECTION FROM *THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH*: Chapter X, Sections 1 and 2:

1. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation, by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and, by His almighty power, determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: yet so, *as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace*.
2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, *he is thereby enabled to answer this call*, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

REVIVE! REVIVE! HE'S ALIVE! HE'S ALIVE!

Genesis 44 and 45

THEME: RESURRECTION—and its benefits: JUSTIFICATION, ADOPTION, SANCTIFICATION,
AND FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

The assignment for prayer this time is fairly simple. The goal of the lesson is to cover the details of the narrative and to see the parallels with the Christian life today. Jacob's family was a part of the Visible Church of the Old Testament; you and your believing friends are part of the Visible Church today. The God of Genesis is the God of today. The family of Jacob received wonderful (and *ultimate*) Good News. The idea is to get the Bible study group to see how God expected the children of Israel to handle the good news of Joseph's "resurrection." Then the discussion can begin to expose what God may want us to do with the Good News of Jesus' Resurrection!

Pray for getting through the details of the narrative fairly quickly, for wisdom in breezing through questions with the goal of getting to present-day application. Pray for an "Oh, I see" realization of the parallels between Genesis 44/45 and the narrative of our own lives before God. Then pray for *revival* in our hearts and an unquenchable desire to spread the Good News that *Jesus is Alive!*

Working through the Discussion Questions

- Q. 1a:** That Joseph is alive.
- Q. 4:** This question is *not* integral to the chapter. It is essentially a "rabbit trail," or a potential waste of your Bible study time. I hope you know your group well enough to decide whether channeling or "Dungeons and Dragons" or seances held for youth groups in your area need to be covered from a biblical point of view among your students or not. If so, here is your opportunity. If not, breeze past this question with a quick reference to Deuteronomy 18:9–22. (The "prophet" of Deuteronomy 18 is, of course, Jesus, Who was to come as the greater Moses or the "better" Moses.)
- Q. 5:** Clothing in the Ancient Middle East was a substantial portion of one's wealth. Tearing one's robes was no light matter. It represented very deep emotional turmoil.
- Q. 8:** "His brother," in 44:20, and in the quoted statements of Jacob in 44:27–30.
- Q.10b:** In human financial relations:
Proverbs 6:1–5 and 11:15.
The Holy Spirit, in our salvation:
Ephesians 1:13–14; 2 Corinthians 1:22; and 5:5.
- Q.11a:** Substitution.

Q.11b: Matthew Henry: "Judah's conscience had lately smitten him for what he had done a great while ago against Joseph (Ch. xlii 21); and, as an evidence of the truth of his repentance, he is ready to undertake, as far as a man could do it, for Benjamin's security. He will not only not wrong him, but will do all he can to protect him. *This is restitution, as far as the case will admit* [my emphasis]; when he knew not how he could restore Joseph, he would make some amends for the irreparable injury he had done him by doubling his care concerning Benjamin" (*ad loc.*: Gen. 43:9).

Q.14: Pop quiz: ask group to recite Genesis 50:20 and Romans 8:28.

Q.17: Jack Miller assigned me Genesis 45 as my text for preaching in a nursing home in the suburban Philadelphia area. In preparing for that short message, I came face to face with the practical impact of Joseph's advice to me (and to the church) today. See what your group thinks about the connection!

Q.20b: See WSC information given below.

QQ.20-end: If you have *any* time left—or if you have wisely saved time for the end—this little set of three questions could provide very helpful discussion.

Preparation of Practicalities

ATMOSPHERE: Don Francisco album or tape:

"Got to Tell Somebody"

"He's Alive!"

Any recording or singing of hymns of the Resurrection.

MEMORY VERSES: You review them as a pop quiz for question 14 above.

HELPFUL CATECHISM QUESTIONS:

Much biblical material stands behind the truths taught in Genesis 44 and 45. These Catechism questions and answers summarize some of it. Do not try to squeeze all this material into the discussion. The resource is simply to help you to clarify issues clearly and quickly.

WSC Q.32: *What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life?*

A.: They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption, sanctification, and the several benefits which, in this life, do either accompany or flow from them.

WSC Q.33: *What is justification?*

A.: Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

WSC Q.34: *What is adoption?*

A.: Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God.

WSC Q.35: *What is sanctification?*

A.: Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed, in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

HELPFUL RESEARCH MATERIAL: Jan Courtney's Bible study book on the *One Anothering* passages in the New Testament.

HELPFUL QUOTE: Matthew Henry on "not regarding the stuff" of 45:20:

"If the good of all the land of Egypt (as it was now better stocked than any other land, thanks to Joseph, under God) would suffice him he was welcome to it all, it was all his own, even the *fat of the land* (v.18), so that they need not *regard their stuff*, v.20. What they had in Canaan he reckoned but stuff, in comparison with what he had for them in Egypt; and therefore if they should be constrained to leave some of that behind them, let them not be discontented; Egypt would afford them enough to make up the losses of their removal. Thus those for whom Christ intends shares in his heavenly glory ought not to regard the stuff of this world: The best of its enjoyments are but stuff, but lumber; we cannot make sure of it while we are here, much less can we carry it away with us; let us not therefore be solicitous about it, not set our eyes or hearts upon it. There are better things reserved for us in that blessed land whither our Joseph has gone to prepare a place."

SPECTACLES OF A SOJOURNER:
Facts in the Face of Faith

Genesis 46 and 47

THEME: FAITH

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for" (Heb. 11:1, 2).

Faith is essential to the Christian life. The New Testament clearly directs us to the Old Testament to see examples of faith. Pray for you and your group to be able to learn and to accept important truths about modern-day faith through a study of Jacob's developing faith in the God who never changes.

Working through the Discussion Questions

Q. 1a: This counting exercise is supposed to emphasize a transition period in the name of the patriarch. We well remember his Jacobean history; Jacob is now in the process of becoming the nation's human founder, "Israel."

Hopefully, the students will recognize that, whereas Moses is somewhat ambivalent toward the choice of names here, God calls him by that personal, knowing, loving, and emotionally involved "Jacob! Jacob!"

Q. 2a: Beersheba is in the southern part of the Promised Land, between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. It is almost down on the border with the "Negev," or southern wilderness. If you find that little peninsula sticking out from the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, you might consider that it is shaped somewhat like an arrowhead. If you follow the direction of that arrow on your map (directly west), you'll run right into Beersheba! "From Dan to Beersheba" meant "from one end of Israel to the other," in the Old Testament.

Q. 2b: "Beer" means "well."
"Sheba" can possibly mean either "oath" or "seven." See Genesis 21:27-31, which refers both to the "seven" and to the "oath."

Q. 2c: Genesis 21, as noted above.
Genesis 26:23ff.
Both Abraham and Isaac had worshipped in this place.

Q. 4c: Possibly among other things, Jacob was leaving Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19).

Q. 5d: The heart of the promises deals with God's constant watchcare and absolute faithfulness.

Q. 6:

Leah	Zilpah	Rachel	Bilhah
1. Reuben	1. Gad	X (Joseph)	1. Dan
2. -Hanoah	2. -Zephon	X (Manasseh)	2. -Hushim
3. -Pallu	3. -Haggi	X (Ephraim)	3. Naphtali
4. -Hezron	4. -Shuni	1. Benjamin	4. -Jahzeel
5. -Carmi	5. -Ezbon	2. -Belah	5. -Guni
6. Simeon	6. -Eri	3. -Beker	6. -Jezer
7. -Jemuel	7. -Arodi	4. -Ashbel	7. -Shillem
8. -Jamin	8. -Arel	5. -Gera	
9. -Ohad	9. Asher	6. -Naaman	
10. -Jakin	10. -Imnah	7. -Ehi	
11. -Zohar	11. -Ishvah	8. -Rosh	
12. -Shaul	12. -Ishvi	9. -Mupim	
13. Levi	13. -Beriah	10. -Hupim	
14. -Gershom	14. -Heber	11. -Ard	
15. -Kohath	15. -Malkiel		
16. -Merari	16. -Serah		
17. Judah			
X (Er)			
X (Onan)			
18. -Shelah			
19. -Perez			
20. -Hezron			
21. -Hamul			
22. -Zerah			
23. Issachar			
24. -Tola			
25. -Puah			
26. -Jashub			
27. -Shimron			
28. Zebulun			
29. -Sered			
30. -Elon			
31. -Jahleel			
32. Dinah			

32 from Leah
16 from Zilpah
11 from Rachel
+ 7 from Bilhah
<hr/>
66 came with Jacob
+ 1 Jacob himself
<hr/>
67 went down into Egypt to meet Joseph and his family
+ 1 Joseph
+ 2 Ephraim and Manasseh
<hr/>
70 TOTAL Israelite family down into Egypt

("33." Jacob)!

Q. 7: According to John Calvin and others, Jacob must have been counted by Moses as part of Leah's family!

Q. 9: For my part, I would not want to consider "only" 130 years to be minimal! On the other hand, Jacob's perspective—and his feeling of connectedness with his covenant family of the past—forced him into comparisons that might seem strange to us today.

The point is that we could learn much from Jacob.

Q.10: Here is the good opportunity for personal application. It should not be too difficult for your students to open up on this one.

Q.13: Jacob is, of course, showing his unswerving *faith* in God and in the promises of God!

Q.15: May it be so with us all!

Preparation of Practicalities

ATMOSPHERE: Try playing "Faith of Our Fathers" or other hymns concentrating on faith, using CD player, tape recorder, piano, guitar, trombone, etc. See if you can get a member of a local high school band to play a hymn or two as you begin.

MEMORY VERSES: Inspect! Encourage! Rejoice!

OBJECT LESSONS:

A. The Fact/Faith/Feelings Train. Make a train of three cars. You could use an old Lionel, a battery-run engine and a couple of cars, or parts of a plastic train set with no means of propulsion except your hand. You could make one from three cardboard boxes, or three tupperware-type containers attached with masking tape. Less effectively, you could draw the train on a white board or a piece of paper. Maybe *most* effective would be getting three "volunteers" to form a "choo-choo" and chug around the room a few times.

Explain how the *facts* of the gospel are most important. *Faith* follows *facts*, sometimes holding on with greater tenacity, sometimes with less. *Feelings*, however, come and go; they are notoriously undependable. We must keep the "locomotives" of our lives in order: facts, then faith, then feeling.

B. The Sunglasses Illustration. Have someone wear dark sunglasses through the first part of the meeting. Maybe have all participants bring sunglasses! At a certain point, have the glasses removed. The darkened view represents the viewpoint of the world, groping in darkness on its own. The clear vision represents the believer, who walks by faith in the light of God's revelation. The unbeliever sometimes makes fun of us, saying that we are looking at the world through "rose-colored glasses." Not so! It is we who—by grace alone—have had our dark, distorting, disorienting glasses removed! What a joy to live and to see by true faith!

HELPFUL QUOTES: "Whatever low or darksome valley we are called into at any time, we may be confident, if God go down with us into it, that he will surely bring us up again."

Matthew Henry, *ad loc.*

"Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly,
Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision,
 where I live in the depths but see thee in the heights;
 hemmed in by mountains of sin I behold thy glory....
Lord, in the daytime stars can be seen from deepest wells,
 and the deeper the wells the brighter thy stars shine;
Let me find thy light in my darkness,
 thy life in my death,
 thy joy in my sorrow,
 thy grace in my sin,
 thy riches in my poverty,
 thy glory in my valley."

The Valley of Vision

This is the first prayer in a book by the same name, with the subtitle: *A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*, edited by Arthur Bennett and published by Banner of Truth Trust. This first prayer is the only one authored by the editor. The rest are straight from Bunyan, Baxter, Watson, *et al.* Each selection is exactly one page in length. A *very* valuable devotional resource!

HELPFUL INFORMATION FROM THE STANDARDS:

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter XIV, "Of Saving Faith," Sections 1, 2 and 3:

1. The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.
2. By this faith, a Christian *believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word*, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.
3. This faith is *different in degrees, weak or strong*; may be often and in many ways assailed, and weakened, *but gets the victory*: growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance, through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our faith.

O SHEPHERD OF MY SOUL

*G*enesis 48

THEME: THANKSGIVING—PASSING THE TORCH

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

This could be the most practical of the twelve studies. If you are working on a calendar year schedule, you will find great material for emphasis on Thanksgiving. Looking back on family holidays, passing on family traditions from one generation to another, appreciating continuity with the past blessings of God and depending upon His blessing in the future, the month of November could be a wonderful time of Genesis 48. Of course, thanksgiving and such thoughts of God's blessings are right for any time of the year.

Simply pray for personal self-evaluation in the hearts of your group members. Pray that they would be aware of their pilgrimage, of its growing value, and of its approaching end. Then pray that they would "connect" with their loved ones on the issues of life and death while there is still time. We are studying the inspired exegesis of Jacob's life. May each of your students begin a verbal, interpretive explanation of his or her life before a holy God!

Working through the Discussion Questions

- QQ.1-3:** Jacob is the focus of our attention, for he is facing death. He has truly become "Israel," finally! We may find many parallels in God's working in our lives, leading us gently and patiently to Himself.
- QQ.6-8:** Jacob is legally adopting Joseph's sons as his own. He is developing a family of *thirteen*, not twelve, sons. When Ephraim is given one twelfth of the Promised Land, Joseph's descendants will have *one sixth* of the property. In other words, Jacob is arranging for Joseph to have the "double portion" normally allotted to the eldest son! (This is accepted as the case in 1 Chronicles 5:1,2.) The tribe of Levi was selected by the Lord for special service in worship; they were not given a particular division of the land. Therefore, the twelve tribes become thirteen in Genesis 48, but the thirteen drop back to twelve in Numbers 3 and 4, when the Lord takes the Tribe of Levi for Himself.
- Q.11:** Be sure to include these important references:
- Psalm 23
 - Isaiah 40:11
 - John 10: Good Shepherd
 - Hebrews 13:20: Great Shepherd
 - 1 Peter 5:4: Chief Shepherd
 - Revelation 7:17.

Q.15: The heart of the promise is the Immanuel Principle, “but God will be with you” (v. 21). The important detailed application of that promise is in the following words of Jacob, looking forward to the Exodus!

QQ.16–18: The application questions are very important this time.

ATMOSPHERE: Try to find old photographs of your family, of a family of one of the people in your group, of the history of your church, etc. Choose them for their value in drawing forth memories—or allowing for the explanation—of the faithfulness of God over the years. Have them on display and allow the group some time to peruse them as they arrive.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE: Move through the first fifteen questions in your normal manner. Then divide your class into small groups of two or three. While in the groups, have them share their responses to questions 16–18, writing down their answers if they have not already done so. Bring the class back together, asking the small groups to “report” on their discussions. Then have each participant decide on one person to whom they will give their responses to questions 16–18! Ask each one to commit to carrying out his plan!

MEMORY WORK: No, it’s not too late to memorize Genesis 50:20 (and Romans 8:28) if you have been putting it off all this time!

MAKING THIS A MAJOR EVENT: Get a copy of the *Heirloom Memory Book* and have it on display. Pass around a new one, or, if you know someone who has one partially filled in, have them share appropriate sections with the group. The book is a marvelous tool for carrying out the primary application of Genesis 48: *Don’t leave them guessing. Exegete your life. Explain your wanderings, your ups and downs, your successes and your failures as you now understand them, under the protective, gentle, guiding hand of your Shepherd.*

*DETAILS: Heirloom Memory Book:
Reflections of My Life:
A Book of Remembrance*

by Bobb Biehl, of the Master’s Planning Group
as of this printing: \$30 plus \$3 S&H
(800) 443-1976, (407) 333-9716.

A VISION OF THE VINE ("MAY HE ADD"):
Setting the Sights on Shiloh

Genesis 49

THEME: MESSIAH—THE EXPLOSION OF GRACE

Preparation by Prevailing Prayer

The goal of this entire study has been to look beyond the human personalities of the book of Genesis. All along, the hope has been for us to put our trust only in the Lord, not to moralize over frail humans. "Go thou and do likewise" cannot be our recommendation over and over. "Look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith:" that is our persistent plea.

Genesis 49, then, does not surprise us. We praise the Lord for another opportunity to speak of His Advent.

Working through the Discussion Questions

- QQ.1-2:** Of course, Jacob spoke these words. God is God Almighty. He can speak to a present situation; He can speak of time to come. He is not limited. He is God over space and time. History—past, present, and future—is indeed *His* story!
- Q. 3:** Jacob calls the 12, including Joseph. The first six were of Leah.
- Q. 4:** Reuben should have received two thirteenths of the property, or about 15.4 percent. The others would have expected to receive one thirteenth, or about 7.6 percent. The sin that caused Reuben to lose his leadership position is recorded in Genesis 35:22.
- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Q. 6a: Judah | Q. 6e: Reuben |
| Q. 6b: Simeon | Q. 6f: Gad |
| Q. 6c: Ephraim | Q. 6g: Dan |
| Q. 6d: Manasseh | Q. 6h: Benjamin |
- Q. 6i-l:** Asher, Gad, Issachar, Zebulun.
- Q. 7:** Joseph! As a matter of fact, the way things worked out, Joseph received two twelfths or one sixth, which was greater than the portion Reuben could originally have expected:
 $2/13 = 15.38$ percent
 $2/12 = 16.67$ percent!
- Then, if you factor in the extensive holdings of the "half-tribe" of Manasseh on the *east* side of the Jordan and the large section for the half-tribe in the land itself, the *effective* property

rights of the "house" of Joseph gave him access to much more than one sixth of the total land mass.

Q. 8: Yes, Shiloh has come. Shiloh must refer to the Messiah, the Christ. He is coming again, but He has come in His Incarnation.

Q. 9: Of Joseph: Joshua,
of Benjamin: Saul,
of Levi: Moses, Aaron, John the Baptist,
of Reuben: (trick question: no one of note),
of Judah: Caleb, David, Solomon, long line of Davidic kings, Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Q.10: The northern "half" of the Kingdom came to be known as "Israel;" it was also known as "Ephraim!" The southern, eventually surviving "half" was known—*is* known—as "Judah," the land of the "Jews."

In the short term, the great blessing went to Ephraim and Manasseh. In the long run, the wonderful spiritual blessing of the descent of the Savior of mankind came through the Tribe of Judah.

Q.11: Verse 11: Triumphal Entry and Crucifixion!
Verse 8: Genesis 3:15.
"Meeting Shiloh" means meeting Jesus!

Preparation of Practicalities

ATMOSPHERE: Whether this final chapter is studied in the final month of the year or not, gather around the piano and sing Christmas carols!

MEMORY WORK: Review 50:20 and Romans 8:28.

PASSAGE TO READ ALOUD: (at the beginning and/or at the end of the meeting) Isaiah 11. Note 11:13!

HELP FROM THE CONFESSION:

The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter VIII, Sections 1 and 6:

1. It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King, the Head and Savior of His Church, the Heir of all things, and Judge of the world: unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.
6. Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect, in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices, wherein He was revealed, and signified to be the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world; being yesterday and today the same, and forever.