

GENESIS 42–50

Introduction

This portion of the “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” study covers Genesis chapters 42–50 which wraps up the story of Joseph and Jacob.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

LDS Study Focus

The LDS study guide focuses on the theme: “God Meant It unto Good.”

Reading the scriptures invites the Spirit. Listen for His promptings as you read, even if they don’t seem directly related to what you’re reading.

It had been about 22 years since Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers. He had suffered many trials, including being falsely accused and imprisoned. When he finally saw his brothers again, Joseph was the governor of all Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh. He could easily have taken revenge on them, and considering what they had done to Joseph, that might seem understandable. And yet Joseph forgave his brothers. Not only that, but he helped them see divine purpose in his suffering. “God meant it unto good” ([Genesis 50:20](#)), he told them, because it put him in a position to save “all his father’s household” ([Genesis 47:12](#)) from famine.

In many ways, Joseph’s life parallels that of Jesus Christ. Even though our sins caused Him great suffering, the Savior offers forgiveness, delivering all of us from a fate far worse than famine. Whether we need to receive forgiveness or extend it—at some point we all need to do both—Joseph’s example points us to the Savior, the true source of healing and reconciliation.

LDS resources also emphasize Judah’s blessing and prophecies about Joseph Smith found only in the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of Genesis.

Biblical Focus

Pharaoh's dream had come true, and famine had begun to ravage the whole land. The emerging nation of Israel required rescue, not just from starvation but also from the guilt of their sin. The Biblical focus is on the preservation and reconciliation of Jacob’s family.

GENESIS 42

Joseph's brothers make their first journey to Egypt

Because Joseph could interpret Pharaoh's dreams from God, Pharaoh made Joseph second only to himself as head over all of Egypt. The seven years of plenty were now over, and the seven years of prophesied famine had begun. The famine was so severe that Jacob's family, who lived in the land of Canaan, felt the effects of the famine and needed grain from Egypt to survive. Jacob sent his ten sons to Egypt for grain; only Benjamin, his new favorite son, did not go. The ten made the journey to Egypt, weighed down by the guilt caused by their sins against Joseph. However, none would have expected to find Joseph in the position he now held.

Joseph's prophetic childhood dreams were fulfilled as his brothers bowed before him. But this time, Joseph was not so quick to speak of his dreams. Instead, Joseph interrogated, threatened, and terrified the brothers who trafficked him. Is it perhaps fair to say that Joseph had mixed motivations for the harsh treatment of his family? Joseph is, like us, both sinner and saint at the same time. He may have been motivated by a desire for revenge, forgiveness, and love, all intertwined together. However, it is safe to say that Joseph wanted more information. Was his father still alive? Was Benjamin safe from his jealous brothers? Had the brothers changed as they aged? Did they feel remorse?

The weight of the brother's sin against Joseph had been haunting them for the past 22 years. Finally, they fully acknowledged their guilt and knew that they deserved punishment.

One of the costliest consequences of sin is the separation it causes. The brothers' relationship with their father, Jacob, was saturated with pain. As they squabbled and blamed one another, we see that their brotherly relationships were also strained. Worst of all, they did not view God as a loving, accepting father but as a judge issuing deserved punishments. Sin creates chasms in our relationships with one another and with God.

Conversation Starters:

- **Was Joseph wrong to treat his brothers the way he did? Why or why not? How does Jesus want us to treat those who hurt us?**
- **We fail at forgiveness all the time; how did Jesus show forgiveness to his enemies?** (This is not a *what would Jesus do* question, but one that points us to vicarious atonement—Christ fulfilling the law *for* us.)
- **What did it look like when Jesus was under the weight of our sin? What does this mean for us now?**
- **Joseph's brothers lived with unconfessed sin for twenty-two years, and it weighed them down. How does unconfessed sin weigh us down and change our outlook on day-to-day life? How can we use God's forgiveness, given in Jesus Christ crucified and risen, to effect healing between family or friends? See Colossians 3:12–13.**

Sharing Personally:

When I read about the guilt of Joseph's brothers in Genesis 42, I can't help but ponder the separation that sin causes. All of the relationships in Jacob's family were strained, and even worse, the brothers were afraid of God and the punishment they knew they deserved. Sinners fear God because he is a terrifying judge who banishes sin from his presence. The reality is sin is serious and grave. We hide it, but God sees it.

As we read Genesis, we have to wait to see how Joseph revealed himself to and forgave his brothers, but we don't have to wait for Jesus to show himself to us. Christ reveals himself to us and forgives us in the Bible. We have eternal forgiveness, and we ask that God lead us to forgive one another according to his will.

GENESIS 43–44

Joseph's brothers make a second journey, and Joseph reveals his identity

The brothers (minus Simeon, detained in prison) were sent back home from Egypt with full sacks of grain *and full wallets*. They interpret the return of their money and harsh treatment as deserved punishment for their crimes against Joseph. However, when their food supplies run low again, Jacob is forced to make an impossible choice. They could all starve, or he could send his children, including his favorite son Benjamin, back to face the severe ruler of Egypt.

Do you remember Jacob's new name? Israel: *One who struggles or wrestles with God*. Jacob's struggle to trust God continued as he remembered God's promise. How would a nation be created through him if *all* his sons perished?

Trusting in God is not always a simple linear thing: *I used to doubt God, but now I don't*. Believers will constantly go through different trials and various ups and downs. As a result, our trust in God will be weak and strong. Jacob and his circumstances changed, but God never did. Ultimately, what matters isn't the strength of one's faith but rather the strength of the object that receives that faith.

The second meeting with the ruler of Egypt was even more confusing than the first. It was understandable that the brothers were afraid that the lunch they were about to have could be a trap to enslave them. How surprising it must have been to hear about God, their God, from the Egyptian ruler's steward. The steward's message to the brothers reminds us again that God is working behind the scenes in this story. As the brothers experienced a total lack of control, they were reminded that God was the one guiding events.

Joseph set up a strange salvation scenario with his youngest brother Benjamin that demonstrated his brothers' change of heart. Judah, responsible for trading Joseph into slavery, was now willing to sacrifice himself to rescue and redeem Benjamin. In his speech to Joseph, he emphasized the effect losing Benjamin would have on his father.

In this portion of the narrative, the theme of all of scripture is echoed. Connect this sacrificial offer to animal sacrifices, Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah, and the sacrifice of Jesus. Here a son is offering to sacrifice himself for his brother because his father cannot bear to lose him. So likewise, the Son of God willingly sacrificed himself for us because Heavenly Father could not bear to lose us.

Note: Remember that it is from the tribe of Judah that the Savior of the world would ultimately be born.

Conversation Starters:

- **Does God's faithfulness to us change when our faith is weak?**
- **How does God use suffering to lead us to repentance?**
- **In what ways is Judah a picture of Jesus? In what ways isn't he?**

Sharing Personally:

In Genesis 44, Judah's offer to trade places with his brother Benjamin reminds me of Jesus' offer to trade places with me. Through Jesus, I have traded places and have become reconciled to God.

Jesus took on the sin that I committed, went to the cross made for me, and died the death that we deserved. Then, in exchange, I am treated as though I had earned his righteousness. I am given the new life that he possessed, and I inherit the heaven that he alone deserves!

GENESIS 45

Separation caused by sin is undone

Judah made a full confession of sin and offered to sacrifice his life and freedom for the sake of his younger brother, Benjamin. Finally, Joseph couldn't bear to keep his secret any longer! This portion of the Bible is filled with themes of reconciliation!

Joseph stopped pretending and was finally moved to reveal his true identity. It's hard to imagine how the brothers responded to him. Their judge and possible executioner just told them that he is their blood, the one they betrayed, sold, and sent down the path of suffering.

Think about how the future nation of Israel, created by these men, would experience the same guilt when the apostles told them that they were responsible for crucifying the Messiah.

Joseph shocked everyone again by shifting the focus from the sins committed and the suffering that ensued to God and what he sought to accomplish. Joseph could see that God had worked through the acts of sinful men to bring about salvation from starvation for the world and his family.

Once again, future Israel would hear an even better message. God used the death of the Messiah to bring about salvation from sin for the world.

Joseph could see the big picture of God's plan and purpose at this point in his life. Sometimes believers can see the big picture, and sometimes we are left confused and in the dark. In those times, we rely on the promises of God.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” ([Romans 8:28](#))

Finally, just as Joseph offered complete forgiveness, provisions, and safety, Jesus offers total forgiveness, safety, and eternal blessings.

Conversation Starters:

- **How did God work through the acts of sinful men to bring about his plan for salvation from death and damnation for the world?**
- **Do you see a Christ-like response when Joseph says, "Come close to me" (Genesis 45:4)?**
- **What do we learn about forgiveness when Joseph says, "Come close to me," and "Don't be angry with yourselves?"**
- **Share stories about God working through sin and hardship in your life.**
- **Besides forgiveness, what does God offer to us?**

Sharing Personally:

The scene of Joseph embracing his brothers in Genesis 45 is heart-meltingly beautiful.

Joseph used words to forgive them all.

Then he used his mouth not to speak but smother them with kisses.

Finally, pulling each one close to himself, he, who had been wronged, wrapped his arms around the wrongdoers, covering them with his tears.

Other than what Jesus has done for us, with his words from and arms spread wide on the cross, there is no better biblical example of the power of grace and forgiveness.

GENESIS 46–50

Israel, the nation born in exile, Jacob reflects, and Joseph reassures

It must have been bewildering to Jacob as he experienced God's promise to build a nation through his family fall apart and then suddenly and miraculously get put back together. He had just sent all of his sons back to Egypt to likely face imprisonment or death. Then they all returned with extraordinary gifts and the news that Joseph was alive!

As Jacob pondered whether or not to leave Canaan and go to Egypt, he undoubtedly wondered what this would mean concerning the promises God had given to him connected to the land of Canaan.

God's response to Jacob is the last recorded revelation for the next 400 years. He permitted him to go down to Egypt, and one last time, he repeated his promises to make Israel a great nation, be with them, and bring them back to the Promised Land. So, by faith, Jacob left Canaan and settled in Goshen with his flocks and herds.

Jacob's family was together again. They were safe, secure, and reconciled, but they were in the wrong country. The stage was set for the remarkable rescue of God's chosen people. One of the major themes highlighted in Exodus is the longing to be in the Promised Land.

Jacob, the man who had been born grasping his older brother's heel, reflected on his life, saying, "My years have been few and difficult" (Genesis 47:9). Many of Jacob's difficulties transpired because of his "efforts" to obtain blessings God had *already* promised him, as certain.

Each chapter of Jacob's story contains temptation, fear, hardship, hard work, family strife, heartbreak, or death. Although Jacob did all he could to change and manipulate his situation, he could not escape difficulties and caused many of them himself. One cannot help but wonder how Jacob's life would have been different had he trusted God's promise from the start.

Similarly, how much of our suffering is caused by our doubt? What if we always trusted that God loved us and would provide what we needed? How would our lives look different? Thankfully, God does not abandon us when we are foolish or weak. On the contrary, in love, he often uses our sufferings to drive us to look to him. We don't need to struggle and strive like Jacob. Our promise is already secure. In Jesus, we find rest.

Interesting tidbits about Jacob's final words

- **Joseph's sons:** Jacob gives Joseph a double portion of his inheritance by adopting Ephraim and Manasseh. Remember, they were half Egyptian. Jacob's blessing upon them secured their status as full Israelite children who would each become a tribe of the nation.
- **Reuben, Simeon, and Levi:** Jacob's first three sons were disqualified from receiving the blessings of the firstborn because of previous sins.
- **Judah:** He received the blessing of the firstborn. The Messiah would come from his line. But he wasn't a good guy either! It was Judah's idea to sell Joseph into slavery, and he conceived a child out of wedlock with a prostitute who turned out to be his daughter-in-law! Weren't the first three brothers passed over because of their sins? Yes, all of this is true. God does not choose to bless his people based upon anything they do or don't do. Sometimes his grace is quite scandalous from our perspective.
- **Jacob's burial:** Jacob made Joseph swear to bury him in the Promised Land. The long and public process emphasized the Israelites did not intend to stay in Egypt. Their home was elsewhere.

The death of Jacob uncovered the guilt and fear the brothers still felt for their crimes against Joseph. Now their father was no longer there to protect them from the punishment they deserved. Joseph's answer bookends his story and reminds us that God always works behind the scenes to accomplish his purpose.

The historical book of Genesis ends like a good novel setting the reader up for the sequel. The time of the patriarchs closes and transitions to a new era, the birth of Israel, the nation.

Conversation Starters:

- Refer to [Genesis 3:17-19](#); how had this prophecy come true in Jacob's life? How do we see it in our own lives?
- Check out [Revelation 21:4-5](#). To what promise do we look forward?
- What did Joseph mean when he said, "Am I in place of God?" ([Genesis 50:19](#))
- Why was Joseph able to forgive his brothers?
- What prevents us from fully forgiving others?

Sharing Personally:

Although Joseph had assured his brothers in Genesis 50 that he had forgiven them (45:4–15), they were afraid to believe it. So too, Satan, the Accuser, will keep reminding us of our sins so that we live in fear of God, our judge. But God has promised us that through Christ, he has trodden our sins underfoot and hurled our iniquities into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). Therefore, believers' sins are no more in Christ regardless of what the Accuser says. Consequently, we can confess our sins honestly, without a need to rationalize them away, believe God's offer of forgiveness, and live in the joy of forgiveness.