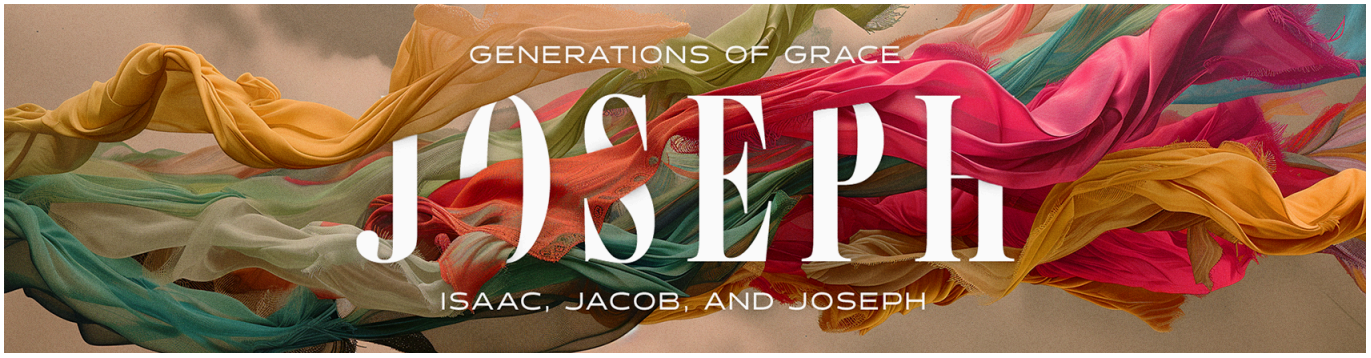


Genesis Part III
(Week 7/8) The Gracious God

Small Group Discussion Questions

Connect *Who do you need to have a sense of urgency for people to respond to God's revelation in Jesus?*

Warm-Up

1. Can you — as a group — give a quick overview of the major events of chapters 42-45?
2. Do you think Joseph would look 'successful' by worldly standards? How is the reality of his life more messy than what people (in Egypt) might see on the surface?

Read Genesis 42:6-23

3. What is the reason that the brothers went to Egypt? How serious was the famine?
4. Who was Jacob unwilling to send? Why is that the case?
5. How do you feel when someone is preferred over you? How has that favouritism affected this family?
6. What happens when the brothers encounter Joseph? What do they immediately feel guilty about?
7. After all these years, why do you think the brothers so quickly remembered their sin?
8. What do you think of their claim that they are honest/innocent men? Is anyone *truly* innocent?
9. Have you ever kept guilt buried? Why should we not fear to bring our guilt to God?

Read Genesis 44:18-34

10. Who did Joseph insist that the brothers bring back to Egypt? How are they greeted when they arrive?
11. How does Joseph now put the brothers to the test? *Why did he have the cup placed in Benjamin's sack?*
12. How does Judah respond to the situation? How does this compare to his treatment of Joseph?

Read Genesis 45:1-8

13. How does Joseph respond to Judah's offer to be a substitute? Why do you think he is so overcome?
14. How many times does Joseph point to *who* is ultimately in control and at work?
15. How robust is Joseph's perspective of God's providence? How do you think he could have that?
16. As Joseph sends them on their way, what does he tell them? Do they understand they're forgiven?
17. Do you ever struggle to live as someone who has been forgiven? Do you ever rehash the past, blame others, or fear God hasn't really meant it? What gives us confidence that we have been forgiven?
18. What helps you to remember and experience the forgiveness that we have received in Christ?

Apply *What is a daily rhythm that reminds you of the forgiveness we can be certain of in Christ?*

Pray *Heavenly Father, thank you for how you are graciously at work, bringing forgiveness and life to a broken world. Thank you that we can come close without fear, because you have come close to us. Amen.*



Genesis Part III
(Week 7/8) The Gracious God

Small Group Discussion Questions

On Your Frontline this Week

Who could you share a meal with this week, to hear how they are going?

For Families

- *Download*: some of the family resources to use at home: stbartskids.org

Listen, Watch, and Read

- *Listen (sermon):* "The Saving God" by Joel Knight: https://stebbes.org/sermons/the-saving-god/#sermons
- *Listen (sermon):* "Moment of Truth" by John Stott: https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=116741&show_file=127019
- *Listen (sermon):* "Discipline" by Tim Keller: https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/discipline/
- *Read (devotion):* "A Journey through Genesis with N T Wright" by N T Wright: https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/29303-from-creation-to-new-creation-a-journey-through/day/5

Series Resources

- *Read*: "Genesis" by Derek Kidner. 📚
- *Read*: "Genesis for Everyone: Part 2" by John Goldingay. 📚
- *Read*: "How to Read Genesis" by Tremper Longman III
- *Read*: "Genesis: Story of God Bible Commentary" by Tremper Longman III
- *Watch*: "Genesis 12-50" by the Bible Project: https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/genesis-12-50
- *Watch*: "How should we read the Old Testament?" by Dan Paterson: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZJtba-JyPVg

📚 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Library (Toowoomba): stbarts.com.au/library

PERPLEXING PASSAGES

Week 7/8 "The Gracious God"
by the Rev'd Adam Lowe (15/11/2026, Toowoomba)

은혜의 하나님 | Nhialiny Lɔ̈ Yum | 恩慈的神 | கிருபையுள்ள தேவன்

Bible Passage: Genesis 42-45

The heart of the sermon: God's saving work of grace through Joseph,
is a pointer to God's ultimate saving work of grace through Jesus.

Heavenly Father, thank you for how you are graciously at work, bringing forgiveness and life to a broken world. Please grow our hunger for you, trusting in the Son who saves. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

If you happened to meet Joseph for the first time *at this point in Genesis,*
you would be forgiven for thinking that this guy is really kicking some goals.

- Pharaoh needed someone to interpret his dreams.
  A cupbearer said that he knew a guy. Joseph delivered.
  And he immediately became the star employee.
- He didn't just experience a meteoric rise to success,
  he was *instantly* catapulted to the loftiest of heights in Pharaoh's senior leadership team. /
- Yet, as impressive as Joseph is, he's not the true power at work.
  Joseph constantly points out that it is not him, but God.
  And even polytheistic Pharaoh has got a hunch that that's true.
- No one is *so* discerning and wise as you, Joseph.
  "You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders.
  Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you." (Genesis 41:39-40) /
- It's almost like God's promise *that his people would be a blessing to the nations,*
  is on a fast-track to being realised. / But there's a problem.

Whilst Joseph is smashing his professional life, his personal life is a wreck.

- It's not just that there are some problems at home, but he's far from home.
- He's in a foreign land *with foreign gods.*

- He had been rejected and betrayed by his brothers. /
  His father thinks he's dead.
  The family — who are pivotal to God's big promises — is fractured.
- Painful memories that Joseph might keep buried and out-of-sight,
  but even the names of his own sons are a constant reminder of the reality.
- Ephraim *means:* God has made me fruitful *in the land of my suffering.*
  Manasseh *means:* God has made me forget. Forget what?
  All the trouble. And all my father's household. /
- Those memories of a distant past might be out of mind.
  But they're likely not far from Joseph's heart.
- And God is about to make him remember. //

As famine hits,
ten of his brothers make their way to Egypt,
and Joseph's identity is revealed, this is not just a story about Joseph.

It's a story of God's saving work of **grace** through him.

- Grace that *exposes*.
  Grace that *tests*.
  Grace that *restores*.

GRACE THAT EXPOSES | GENESIS 42

드러내시는 은혜 | Athiɛ̈i cïï Nyuɔ̈th | 揭露的恩典 | **வெளிப்படுத்தும் கிருபை**

First, we see: **GRACE THAT EXPOSES**. *Chapter 42, verse 19:*

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[19] If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households. [20] But you must bring your youngest brother to me, so that your words may be verified and that you may not die." This they proceeded to do. [21] They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us." [22] Reuben replied, "Didn't I tell you not to sin against the boy? But you wouldn't listen! Now we must give an accounting for his blood." [23] They did not realise that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter. [24] He turned away from them and began to weep...

So, just as God had warned through Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph's interpretation,
famine has hit and spread over the whole country.

- This is not like when your local Woolies or Coles runs out of sourdough. But as the famine is described as having spread over all the face of the earth, *it evokes an image like THE flood.*
- It's similar language. This isn't a local drought, but a crisis with far reaching implications.
- People aren't going to just run out of bread, *but they and their livestock will starve to death.*
- We're told at the end of ch.41, *"all of the world came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph."*

- And Joseph's forgotten family is no different.

They are **sent**, they **meet** Joseph, and they are **exposed**.

- So first note that the ten brothers are **SENT** by Jacob, *their dad*.
- Word is getting around that there is grain in Egypt.
  And so Jacob says, "why do you just keep looking at each other?" (v.1)
- Get on with it. Go. It's our only hope that we may live and not die.
  Yet it's not itself without risk. That's partly why Jacob doesn't want to send his youngest.
  The family hasn't changed. Maybe Jacob is nervous about entrusting another son to their care.
- But they have to go, and so they do. / When they arrive, they **MEET** with Joseph.
- They bow before him — in a partial fulfilment of Joseph's dreams *all those years ago.*
  Partial, because there are only ten of them — not the eleven *plus their dad.*
  But — *although Joseph recognised them,* and the dreams come flooding to *his* mind,
  they do not recognise him. And as Joseph pretends to be a stranger, *speaks harshly to them,*
  and accuses them of being spies, the lie they have been living is **EXPOSED**.
- It's ironic that as the brothers adamantly claim that they are honest men telling the truth,
  they are simultaneously convicted of the guilt of what they had done to Joseph 20+ years ago…

[Verse 21] Surely we are being punished because of our brother. We saw how distressed he was when he pleaded with us for his life, but we would not listen; that's why this distress has come on us

---

- They are joining the dots. Their guilt must have been thick!
- That the very first thing they think of away from home, in a foreign land, under pressure,
  is the terrible — evil thing — that they did decades earlier, the lie they told their dad,
  and probably the perpetual lies that they've had to collectively peddle ever since!
- It must have been exhausting.
  They've likely done everything to bury that guilt. But guilt doesn't stay buried.
  It lurks just below the surface ready to be exposed. /
- Maybe they're feeling a bit sorry for themselves at that moment. /
  Maybe they wish they had never done what they did. /
  Reuben even reminds them that he tried to stop them doing what they did.
  But there must have been something in them at that moment,
  even if only for self-preservation, that regretted what they had done,
  knew that it was wrong, and wished they could put it right.
- Their lives hang on the premise that they are honest men.
  But they know — heart-of-hearts, in a bigger sense — that they are not.
- They even — *inadvertently* — make a confession,
  right in front of the one *whom they have offended. //*
- One of the brothers is to remain,
  the rest are sent packing to retrieve the other.

But, why does Joseph insist on that? *Have you ever wondered that?*
Why doesn't he just reveal his identity *there and then!*?

- Surely he must have been tempted to! He must have dreamt about this moment!
- Surely part of him when he saw them must have thought, finally!
- Kind of rubbing his hands together, thinking, this is going to be great!
  This is my chance to get back. / I mean just imagine what it would have been like for him.
- It's been 20 + years since he's seen his brothers. /
  He's lived as a slave. Been locked up in prison. Had his life on the line.
- He's been forgotten over-and-over again…. But now: *the very ones who originally got him into the mess are here.* And their lives are in his hands! /
- *Sometimes at reunions people are anxious to look more successful than their peers.*
  When Joseph first told his brothers his dreams, they scoffed at what might become of him.
- Look at what has become of him! But Joseph doesn't gloat, *nor does he grind them to a pulp.*
- He's tough. 100%. He's likely desperate to see if they have changed.
  But it's obvious that his main motive is to graciously restore them.
- *When he hears their admission of guilt, and that Reuben tried to save him, Joseph weeps. //*
- So, Simeon stays with Joseph and the rest are set on their way:
  With bags filled with grain, provisions for the journey, and even with their silver returned.

GRACE THAT TESTS | GENESIS 43-44

시험하시는 은혜 | Athiɛ̈i yëë Thëm | 试炼的恩典 | **சோதிக்கும் கிருபை**

- With their guilt exposed, *they think they're done for when they discover the silver in their sacks.*
  But this is grace, drawing them back into a relationship with him.

Second, we see, **GRACE THAT TESTS**. *Chapter 43, verse 1:*

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[1] Now the famine was still severe in the land. [2] So when they had eaten all the grain they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go back and buy us a little more food."

[3] But Judah said to him, "The man warned us solemnly, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.' [4] If you will send our brother along with us, we will go down and buy food for you. [5] But if you will not send him, we will not go down, because the man said to us, 'You will not see my face again unless your brother is with you.

We don't really know how long it has been since their first trip to Egypt for grain,
but they're obviously pretty apprehensive about returning. Maybe because of the danger,
but also because of the condition: *they're not to return without the youngest brother, Benjamin.*

- They know that their dad, Jacob, is not going to be favourably disposed towards that!
- Benjamin isn't just the youngest, but he's the second of only two children born to Rachel.
- And Rachel died giving birth to him.

- The thought of losing Benjamin *as well as Joseph,* was just too much for Jacob to bear.
- *If we're going somewhere and we're waiting on one child to come out of the house, I'm always wary of sending two in to collect one, as you'll probably just get a different two back instead of 3!*
- But Jacob has a lot more on the line here.
  Benjamin is the only living link to the wife whom he so loved.
- But he relents and — dusting off his playbook from his encounter with Esau — encouraging them to take some gifts to help smooth things over in Egypt.

But much to their surprise, when the brothers arrive in Egypt, Joseph throws a feast!

- The brothers are scared that there might be retribution for the silver in their sacks, yet astonishingly, we read — *verse 34* — "they feasted and drank freely with him."
- They're a couple of thousand years early to have heard the story of the prodigal son, but they're getting a glimpse of what it is like for the guilty to be welcomed home.
- *It's just going to take them right up to the end of Genesis to really believe that they are forgiven.*
- If you're not yet a follower of Jesus it can be hard to face the reality of our sin, yet weirdly, it can also be hard to accept the reality of grace.
  It can seem too good to be true! That what don't deserve it. But that's the point.
- Of course, if you're a follower of Jesus, we can struggle to accept that at different times, too.
- *It's why we need to be constantly reminded of that good news, and let it take a grip on our life.*
- *That's probably a glimpse at why Joseph puts them to the test.*

- A cup is hidden in the sack and Benjamin — must stay behind as Joseph's slave.

Can you see what is happening here?

- Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, *but all of their silver was returned to them.*
  Joseph was sold into slavery, *now Benjamin is to stay as a slave.*
- It's like history repeating! Almost.
- For Judah, who once said, "come, let us sell him" (37:27), [he was the ringleader] now says, let your servant remain instead of the boy" (44:33).
- Maybe hiding the cup in the bag seemed like a cruel act of entrapment, but actually this is a point of redemption for the brothers!
- It's the first time in the Bible that anyone offers themselves as a substitute. They could have been safe. They could have dashed home and offered a new version of a well-rehearsed lie.
- But convicted by his guilt, Judah now chooses a different path.
- It's no wonder that that's the moment when Joseph can no longer hold it together.

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[1] Then Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, "Have everyone leave my presence!" So there was no one with Joseph when he made himself known to his brothers. [2] And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh's household heard about it.

- Depending on how you count it, Joseph is equal with David in the number of times that he is recorded as crying! It begins discreetly, then in private, but now — everyone can hear!

- It's not just because Joseph is a super-emotional person.
- But there's something about his gracious affection that reflects the very heart of God.
- God, who longs for us to turn to him and to seek his mercy.

To receive his **GRACE THAT RESTORES**. *Chapter 45, verse 3:*

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[3] Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

[4] Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! [5] And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. [6] For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. [7] But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

[8] "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God.

It's the big reveal! *Huzzah*! It's me, Joseph!
It's like the ancient equivalent of undercover boss!

- But note that the repeated emphasis of Joseph, is not the revealing of his identity, but on the very purposes of God. / Do not be distressed or angry with yourselves…

- Why? Because:
  Verse 5: it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you.
  Verse 7: God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant.
  Verse 8: it was not *you* who sent me here, but God.
- God sent me. God sent me. God sent me. /
  When they still can't accept that they have been forgiven, Joseph in chapter 50, will once again remind *them* that what they meant for evil, God *intended* for good.
- As life was preserved through Noah;
  life has been preserved through Joseph.
- Joseph understands his role, but he doesn't elevate his position.
- He's always seeking God's purposes in the present and pointing to him.

That doesn't excuse what the brothers did *or mean that what they did was good.*

- Notice in verse 4, as Joseph invites them to draw near that he still names the sin.
- But that's the point. Joseph has made a way for the guilty to come near.
- Not by pretending that the sin never happened,
  but by naming it, and bearing the cost.
- He doesn't just invite them to come close, but makes a way for them to live near. /
- *Does that sound familiar?* The one they sinned against is the one who saves them.//

And he sends them home, to collect their dad so that they can be one.

- assisted by Pharaoh's carts;
  equipped with provisions;
  clothed in new outfits — Benjamin gets a little extra,
  and warned not to quarrel on the way.
- I do love that little instruction at the end! *You know what siblings are like on a journey!*
- But I think there's more going on than that.
- In the wake of being forgiven, Joseph doesn't want them to fear him.
  Nor does he want them to start dredging up the past or playing the blame game.
- He has drawn the line of forgiveness.
  And he wants them to walk forward in the reality of the grace they'd received.

In C S Lewis' "the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" Edmund betrays his siblings for some Turkish Delight and the promise of a crown. His betrayal could cost Edmund's siblings their lives and by the time that Edmund realises what he's done, there's nothing he can do about it. But Aslan can. //

Just before Aslan pays the price for Edmund's guilt, just before he died in the place of the traitor,
he speaks with Edmund privately, and then returns saying to the others:
"HERE IS YOUR BROTHER, AND — THERE IS NO NEED TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT WHAT IS PAST."

No need to talk to him about what is past.

- How could that be the case?
  How can we possibly know that type of grace?
  How can our guilt be surfaced and not crush us?
- We're told in Ephesians 2:
  "You who once were far away, have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (v.13)
- Can you see?
- The reason we can be confident that we are forgiven, is because of Jesus.

- Judah, the guilty brother, offered himself in Benjamin's place.
  Jesus, the innocent one, took the place of the guilty.
- Joseph forgave his brothers and brought them near.
  Jesus gave his life to bring us home forever.