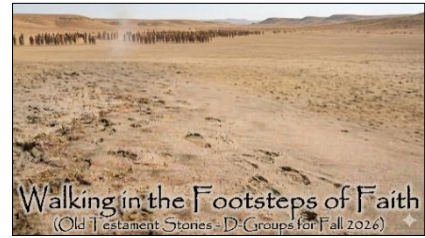


“Walking in the Footsteps of Faith”

OT Stories - Fall 2026 D-Groups

For Wednesday, September 23
JOSEPH (Genesis 37, 39-50)



The Big Picture - Where We Are in the OT Timeline

We began with ABRAHAM last time. His story is an appropriate place to start as the “father of faith,” but also because of his place in Israel’s history. From the end of Abraham’s story in Genesis 25, the focus of the narrative turns to his son, ISAAC, the “first” son through whom God’s promise would be fulfilled then to JACOB and his 12 sons, those who would become the “12 tribes of Israel.” This is the ancestral line of everyone part of ethnic Israel. Within this generation, Genesis highlights the role of the one identified as Jacob’s most favored son, JOSEPH.* Even as we move further into the OT story, though, it’s important that we recognize the original promise of Genesis 12:1-3. What God has promised to Abraham - ultimately, that his name would be great, that he would be the father of a great nation with many people *and that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him* - requires those who would become the Israelites, the people through whom the Messiah would come! That’s a central part to the Joseph story as well as the rest of the OT: **God preserving the people of the promise in faithfulness to what He guaranteed Abraham (see Genesis 45:1-8).**

* *Once we get into the OT story, Joseph is not directly listed as one of the 12 tribes; rather, his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, are both counted as part of the 12. To make the math work, Levi’s descendants, due to their role as priests, are not listed among the 12 even though he’s one of Jacob’s 12 sons.*

The Close-Up for September 23 - Genesis 37-50

READ the TEXT: GENESIS 37:1-50:26 with a focus on 37:1-36 and 39:1-46:34 with 50:14-21

Some notes on the overall flow of the story with emphasis on the key sections listed above:

37:1-36 ... Joseph’s dreams (emphasizing a place of supremacy over his parents and brothers) are foundational for the whole narrative, foreshadowing what eventually happens in the story. He has a place of special status in Jacob’s eyes being the firstborn son of the wife he clearly preferred (see 37:3). It all stoked jealousy in his brothers who devise a plan to get rid of him - instead of killing him, though, they sell him into slavery. Eventually, Joseph ends up in Egypt as a servant to Potiphar, a high-ranking official of Pharaoh.

39:1-23 ... Joseph is successful in Potiphar’s house because the Lord was “with him” in all that he did (such a key theme in vv. 2-5 and the broader story!), earning a place of prominence. Yet, because he chooses the right path when Mrs. Potiphar makes her advances, he ends up falsely accused and lands in prison. (*While the story is much bigger, there is still a good lesson here about fleeing temptation.*) Yet, even there, as an appropriate bookend for the chapter, due to the way Joseph handles himself, he thrives. Of course, that success is the result of something - better Someone - much bigger (see v. 21): even amidst the challenging circumstances, God was faithfully at work through His steadfast love to help Joseph succeed!

40:1-41:57 ... Joseph interprets two dreams - one favorably and the other, well, not so much; both times, though, God allows him to do so accurately. Yet, Joseph is forgotten for a long time. It's another cycle of a disappointing and challenging situation that still ultimately leads to Joseph being elevated. Notice this: it spans two years (see 41:1 - two full years, even!). Joseph bides his time faithfully going about his duties. Eventually, an opportunity presents itself as Pharaoh has his own dreams that need interpretation. Joseph is called upon, provides the meaning - anticipating 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of famine - and eventually ends up in this highest place of prominence - second-in-command to Pharaoh himself. He's placed there as the one to administer the plan to help Egypt prepare for the lean years during the healthy ones. ***Yet, within the story of Genesis, God's purposes are much larger than that!***

42:1-46:34 ... Due to Joseph's planning, even when Jacob's family line experiences hardship during the famine and goes to Egypt in search of food, he is in the right spot to provide for them - ***in the right position to preserve the lives of the people of promise (see 45:1-8)***. It's a fascinating narrative, but finally, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and is re-united with his father, Jacob. Remember Joseph's dream from back in chapter 37? That becomes reality! By the end of Genesis, the whole family has now moved to Egypt.

50:14-21 (see also 45:1-8) ... such a key text as Joseph reiterates God's purposes amidst all that unfolded (see vv. 19-21). Even still, when read through the lens of the promise of 12:1-3, perhaps even Joseph undersells what is ultimately accomplished through him. Even though it meant these hard things for Joseph, God faithfully preserves the people of promise and the Messiah's line through His ongoing faithfulness, sovereignty and providence.

KEY THEMES in the Story (*reflect on these in Joseph's story and in your own*):

The "bad things" that Joseph experiences - sold into slavery → falsely accused and imprisoned → forgotten for two years in prison ... ultimately, undeserved and truly hard.

The way Joseph succeeds and even thrives amidst each of those situations because "God was with him" (see 39:2-5 and 21-23) ... Joseph's character - he does not have a "victim mindset," but continues to demonstrate integrity and reliability - cause him to be elevated to roles of significance even amidst each challenge. Eventually, he even lands in the place of prominence as second-in-command to Pharaoh in his role. Of course, the narrative clearly identifies God's presence as key to that success. *Ultimately, that matters most; yet, instead of passively sitting back while waiting or remaining in a posture of sulking, trusting God means displaying right character regardless.* God rewards such active faith and confidence in Him.

God's faithfulness to His promise, including His sovereignty and providence - He's "in control" and actively at work in human history to bring about His purposes (Romans 8:28).

Two Key Reminders throughout This Semester

1. God is ultimately the HERO of these stories; remember, as part of Scripture, God is *revealing* Himself to us. ***So, what do we learn about Him through this story? What can we learn from the human characters about putting our faith/trust in Him?***
2. We read these stories through a Christ-lens. ***So, how do we read this story differently in light of Jesus and being His followers?***