

LIFE GROUPS

Genesis 49:13-33

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: Does God still bless people by giving them *things*?

Perhaps you've heard a similar question in a Bible study or small-group setting. Such questions are often snuffed out with a "No. God blesses his people *spiritually*, like Ephesians 1:3 says. God 'has blessed us in Christ with every *spiritual* blessing in the heavenly places.'"

Is this true? Does the Bible present God's blessing as physical gifts in the Old Testament and spiritual realities in the New? Like so many theological truths, our either/or categories fail to accurately capture the message of blessing presented in the whole Bible. Here are three reasons Christians shouldn't be so quick to view God's blessing as spiritual to the exclusion of the material.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**

2. **Read Genesis 49:13-21, 27. What kinds of blessings do we see in these verses? What do these blessings teach us about God and how He uses His people in His Kingdom?**

Jacob declared that Zebulun would be enriched by seaborne trade. Essentially the oracle declared that the tribe would border on the Mediterranean Sea and the city of Sidon. ¹

¹ Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 704.

The oracle predicted that, because Issachar would prefer abundance and luxury, he would be too willing to trade his liberty for the material things of life.²

Jacob says that, instead of using his ability to work for himself, Issachar would work for the Canaanites for food and rest.³

Although Dan would be smaller than the other tribes, its calling was to help its fellow tribes against the suppression of a mighty enemy⁴

The tribe of Dan became the tribe of Samson, and medieval Jewish commentators understood the metaphor of the viper to be Samson, who by his stealth and trickery defeated the Philistines. Dan's descendants would excel in stealth in battle.⁵

Even though Gad will be raided by marauding bands, he will fight valiantly⁶

The oracle predicts that Asher would be fertile and productive, so much so that he would provide delicacies to royalty⁷

But the specific point of this oracle is that Naphtali would be a messenger with a message of victory.⁸

Benjamin, according to the oracle, would be so successful that he would be able to share with others of his substance.

Like Judah, Benjamin is compared to an animal, specifically, a wolf. It is no less voracious an animal than the lion but usually kills far more than it can eat. That is the picture given here, for Benjamin would divide the spoil (*y^eħallēq šālāl*). Here again, success is predicted for a son of Jacob.⁹

“Matthew Henry reflects on the different skills and personalities of Jacob's sons in Genesis 49. “Among God's Israel then,” he writes, “is to be found a great variety of

² Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 705.

³ Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 705.

⁴ Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 705.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 557.

⁶ Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 705.

⁷ Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 706.

⁸ Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 706.

⁹ Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 706–707.

dispositions, contrary to each other, yet all contributing to the beauty and strength of the body.” Indeed, we know that the Lord will use our differences to build up the body of Christ today” – Ligonier Article

3. How is God using your unique gifts and personality for the benefit of other believers?

“God gifts all of us in such a way that our gifts channel blessings to others by meeting various needs, and they channel the blessing of humility to us by exposing our pride and pushing us to receive God’s grace to live by God-pleasing faith (Hebrews 11:6).” – Jon Bloom

“Our gifts are not intended to be platforms where we try to gain our sense of significance from the esteem of men. Our real significance comes from God choosing us in Christ, gifting us, and deploying us in his kingdom for his purposes. There is more significance there than we can fully comprehend and appreciate. The praise of men is usually vicarious fluff.” – Jon Bloom

“Our lives are not about pursuing our dreams. Many of our dreams are self-exalting pride fantasies and gratuitously selfish when we really examine them. And the truth is, we rarely know what’s best for us and what will really make us happy. But our Designer knows. He knows exactly what we’re made for and how we can live the life we’ve been given to the fullest and most fruitful. If we follow him by faith, he will lead us in the most ultimately fulfilling paths — even when those paths lead through suffering and death.” – Jon Bloom

“There is no higher calling for you than to be you, and God will reward you beyond your wildest dreams if you faithfully steward your gifts for others.” – Jon Bloom

4. Read Genesis 49:22-24. How was Joseph blessed in these verses? What do we learn about God from these blessings?

Here, Joseph himself is rewarded with a blessing. Jacob recognized that although Joseph was attacked, God—the Mighty One, the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel—remained with him. Through each attack, God helped and blessed Joseph, keeping him steady and strong. As a result, Joseph persevered through all he suffered and endured, and ultimately received a blessing, not only from Jacob, but also from God Himself. This blessing, delivered through Joseph’s obedience and trust, carried on through generations to come, establishing a true legacy of faith.

Joseph's power came from "the Mighty One of Jacob." Jacob declared that God alone had saved Joseph¹⁰

The God who empowered Joseph was also his Shepherd—"from there is the Shepherd" (v. 24), says Jacob. Ironically, up to now the only mention of *shepherd* in Genesis was that "every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians" (46:34b). But here Jacob tells his son (the *Egyptians'* viceroy) that God is his Shepherd—that he's been cared for as a sheep. What lavish care! Here is the initial inspiration for Psalm 23, the most comforting of all poems.¹¹

Here again is the primary source of the great biblical metaphor of a rock as indicating the unchanging dependability of God—elsewhere "the Rock of Israel" (2 Samuel 23:3; Isaiah 30:29).¹²

The God who defends Joseph is a Shepherd, one who is able to lead and defend his people (48:15 and 35:3). He is also the Stone of Israel, that is, one who is stable and unchanging (see Isa. 8:14, where "stone" and "rock" are parallel).¹³

5. Do you trust God to be your strength, shepherd, and rock? Why or why not?

6. Read Genesis 49:25-26 & Ephesians 1:3-4. How do we see God bless Joseph in this passage of Genesis? What do these passages teach about the way God blesses His children?

Thus, we cannot miss the point: It was God in the full significance of these names and metaphoric appellations who had delivered Joseph and sustained him—and who would effect further blessing in his life. And for us his children, God has "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the

¹⁰ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 559.

¹¹ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 560.

¹² R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 560.

¹³ Allen P. Ross, [Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 708.

foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:3, 4a). The promise of his care for us is equally astonishing. Our awesome God will effect our care and blessing!
The book of Genesis is about blessing, about grace. The book of Genesis is about getting blessing out to the world. And¹⁴

And I am always aware that a hurting heart needs to understand and believe that God’s gracious plan is one of blessing and that despite circumstances his people are always blessed.

Fellow Christian, whatever your situation—and it may seem impossible—God is with you to effect your care and blessing.¹⁵

“God created his people as spiritual and physical beings designed for relationship—with both himself and others. We shouldn’t be surprised when his blessing follows the pattern of his good design. Before the fall, to live in God’s blessing was to know the fullness of life in his presence physically, spiritually, and relationally. To remove any one of these categories from our view of God’s blessing will ultimately carry us away from the picture presented in his Word.” – **Rusty Osborne**

7. What areas of your life do you struggle to trust that God blesses His children?

“Rather than taking ‘spiritual’ to mean *not material*, it’s better to understand it as *mediated by the Spirit*” – Rusty Osborne

“The point, though, is that these evidences of grace are not the fullness of what God intends for his people. In the kingdom’s already/not-yet era, there are seasons of both “abundance and need” ([Phil. 4:12](#))—but in the Spirit we have all the blessings that enable us to live in contentment ([Phil. 4:13](#)). The Spirit empowers us to live faithfully and contently in a time when Christ doesn’t reign on the earth and the church often faces persecution.” – Rusty Osborne

“How we think about God’s blessing is directly affected by the way we read the end of the biblical story”
– Rusty Osborne

“Blessing is not something reserved for the spiritual realm—it encompasses “all things” God intends for his children ([Rom. 8:32](#)). The God who has blessed us in Christ won’t

¹⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 560.

¹⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 561.

stop until all the earth is his and his people enjoy his presence forever.” – Rusty Osborne

PRAYER

Thank God that as our Father, He has blessed us with the greatest blessing in Jesus. Ask Him to help the parents in your group learn how to take an active role in blessing their children. Pray for the children represented in the group, that they would receive the blessing of their family.



FURTHER STUDY

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/messiahs-kingdom>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/the-testament-of-jacob-2/>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/gad-asher-and-naphtali>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/series/themes-from-genesis/jacobs-blessing>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/dan-serpent>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/spiritual-blessings/>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/steward-the-gifts-god-has-assigned-to-you>