

LIFE GROUPS

Genesis 50:1-14

INTRODUCTION

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

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: How important is leaving a legacy behind for you?

The most important thing we can leave behind after we die is a legacy of faith and devotion to Christ. Today we will look at the legacy of Joseph and see that as we commit our lives to God, we secure a powerful legacy and the ultimate reward of fellowship with our Father.

Ben Franklin and others have quipped that “nothing is certain but death and taxes.” And yet even though we know both are coming—death most certainly—many of us spend more time thinking about taxes than death.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

2. **Read Genesis 50:1-14. How did Jacob show his faith in God’s promises as he faced the end of his life? How is God’s faithfulness shown through Jacob’s life, death, and funeral?**

But throughout, Jacob retained that unquenchable desire for the blessing of God. There was deep piety that habitually relied on God, in spite of everything else. He had learned in his life the true source of blessings, and he fought with God and man to be privileged to hand that blessing on to his sons.¹

“Prior to his death, Jacob obligates all of his sons to bury him in Canaan (vv. 29–32), an order he earlier gave to Joseph alone (47:29–31). Despite the successes Israel and his sons have

¹ Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 715.

enjoyed in Egypt (vv. 1–12), Jacob knows that their future does not lie there. Life is found in the Promised Land — the place of the Lord’s special presence. To remain willingly outside of that land is to choose death over life. Of course, the full canon of Scripture tells us Canaan was only the first step towards a new heavens and earth in which God will bless all who share Abraham’s faith ([Isa. 65:17–25](#); [Gal. 3:9](#); [Rev. 21](#)).

Like Abraham and Isaac, Jacob demonstrates his trust in the Lord’s promise in asking to be buried with them at Machpelah, in the good land the Creator promised to his family ([Gen. 49:29–32](#)). God’s faithfulness to His word guarantees Jacob’s salvation, and he teaches his sons this lesson by having them bury him there. John Calvin wrote that Jacob “did not wish to be carried into the land of Canaan, as if he would be nearer to heaven for being buried there; but that, being dead, he might claim possession of a land which he had held during his life...because it was profitable that the memory of the promise should be renewed, by this symbol, among his surviving sons, in order that they might aspire to it.” — Ligonier Article, “Jacob’s Last Words”

“Yahweh told Jacob that Joseph would close his eyes and that he would be brought up again to the Promised Land ([Gen. 46:1–4](#)). In other words, God said He would allow Joseph to be present at Jacob’s death and then later let him return to Canaan. Joseph was indeed privileged to see his father pass away ([Gen. 49:28–50:1](#)), and today’s passage describes Jacob’s return (in body) to his fathers’ land. Once more we understand that the Lord keeps His Word.

The original audience of Genesis — the Israelites freed from Egyptian slavery — also needed assurance of God’s faithfulness. Our Father inspired Moses to write Genesis to tell His people that they must stand against the pharaoh and follow Moses into the Promised Land. By keeping His promise to Jacob, God revealed His fidelity to the Israelites and gave them confidence that He would keep His promise to be with them as they left the land of the Nile ([Ex. 3–4](#).)” — Ligonier Article, “Last Respects Jacob”

How proud Jacob was of his viceroy son—and especially that though he reigned in Egypt, Egypt was not in him. Joseph’s stand-alone character had prepared him well for life at the top. He was unphased. He was proud to be Jacob’s son. Joseph drank in every word from his father about his people’s history and the words of God. Though viceroy, he sat at his father’s feet.²

Cortege. What followed was an affair of state, a grand state funeral conducted with national pomp and ceremony. The father of the man to whom Egypt owed so much, who had saved them from starvation, who used the occasion to consolidate Egyptian power and empire, must not be buried as a common man. Jacob was honored by an immense cortege that accompanied his bier to Canaan.³

² R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 565.

³ R. Kent Hughes, [Genesis: Beginning and Blessing](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 566.

3. What witness did the large procession (v. 9) bear to the legacy Joseph and his family had left in Egypt and the impact they had made on the people there? How does this procession continue to show the fulfillment of God's promise that they would be a blessing to the world?

Here we have a bright flash of God's initial promise to Abraham—"and I will bless you ... so that you will be a blessing" (12:2). Now all of Egypt stopped and paid homage with great pomp and circumstance at the passing of Abraham's grandson. A vast blessing issued from Abraham's grandson to Egypt and the world. It was a glimpse of a worldwide blessing that would have its fulfillment in Abraham's ultimate Son.

Along with this, the procession from Egypt to Canaan was a mini-rehearsal of Israel's grand exodus from Egypt. Many of the words and descriptives used here to portray the procession—"servants of Pharaoh," "flocks," "herds," "chariots," "horsemen," and "great company"—occur again in the story of the exodus. Now Joseph bore the bones of Jacob to the promised land, but then Joseph's bones would be carried in the exodus to the land (cf. Exodus 13:19). Now the Egyptian horses and chariots helped the procession; then they would oppose it (cf. Exodus 14:9, 17, 18, 26, 28). Now Israel's children were left behind; then they would join in the exodus.⁴

To what extent the Egyptians joined in we do not know. But we do know that the Canaanite observers were amazed at the Egyptians' mourning and named the place Abel-mizraim—"mourning of Egypt." Was their sorrow from the heart or because of Pharaoh's order? Surely the latter. But it was a remarkable outpouring nevertheless.⁵

4. In this passage, how do we see a legacy of faith being carried from one generation to the next? What are you doing to ensure a legacy of faith is being passed to the generation after you?

5. How does this passage give us a foreshadow of the exodus of Egypt that we see later in scripture and ultimately the exodus in Christ? How do you need to respond to this example of the exodus?

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 567.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 568.

Today as we look back to the exodus, we see that it was effected through the blood of the Passover lamb. Those who by faith daubed the blood of the slain lamb over their door were delivered from death and then from Egypt. The same fiery presence of God that passed among the sacrificed pieces four hundred years earlier now stood as a pillar of fire between Egypt and Israel to effect Israel's deliverance (cf. Exodus 13:17–22).

All this pointed down the centuries to the new exodus in Christ. In New Testament terminology, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Those who by faith come under his blood experience deliverance. And as a redeemed people they find a place in him. Their promised land is the new Eden where Christ dwells.

Have you made the exodus? Have you by faith rested all your hope of deliverance on his blood? Have you passed through the sea? Do you know the protection of his fiery presence? Are you destined for the place he has prepared for you?

If not, come! By faith come to Christ—your atonement, your Savior, your exodus, and your destiny.⁶

The family of Jacob, with its attendant company of Gentiles, rehearsed, as it were, the future homecoming of the nation in fulfillment of the promises to Israel. Once more the children of Israel would leave Egypt, taking with them the bones of the patriarch (see Exod. 13:19). Here, however, the pilgrimage to the Land of Promise was only temporary; the grave was only a claim to the land. Moses would lead the next pilgrimage to Canaan.⁷

6. What hope do we have as believers as we face death? What ways can you model that same hope as you face death?

"we're going to eat and drink with the Son of Man" – Tim Keller, "On Death", (55)

"When you at last you see the God of the universe looking at you with love, it will inflict on you a joy that will make all of the potentialities of your soul erupt and you will experience the glorious freedom of the children of God" - Tim Keller, "On Death", (65)

"we do not anxiously wonder if we have been good enough to go to God when we die" - Tim Keller, "On Death", (67)

7. How has your feelings toward death been affected by the value our culture puts on affluence and this world? Are there any areas in your life where you view death like the rest of the world?

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, [*Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 569.

⁷ Allen P. Ross, [*Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 715.

“Christ’s defeat of death affects not just how we die, but how we face loss.” – Jamie Carlson

“[It] doesn’t leave you to face death on your own, by holding up your life record and hoping it will suffice. Instead it gives you a champion who has defeated death, who pardons you and covers you with his love” – Tim Keller, “On Death”, (31)

8. Do we tend to grieve or rejoice more when a brother or sister in the Lord passes away? Do we give space for our friends and neighbors to grieve and rejoice well?

For the unbeliever, what a relief it can be to know human death isn’t just part of the circle of life, or an absorption into the cosmos or a collective being.

“When a Christian dies, shall those of us who remain weep or rejoice? The biblical answer is both, even simultaneously.

We should conclude that our sorrows at the death of a believer are *joyful* sorrows, and our rejoicing at the death of a believer is a *sorrowful* rejoicing. There is nothing hopeless about the sorrow. And there is nothing flippant about the joy. The joy hurts. And the sorrow is softened with invincible hope.

This is why one of the most common watchwords of the Christian life is “sorrowful yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10). Sorrow and joy are not merely sequential. They are simultaneous. This is not emotional schizophrenia. This is the complex harmony of the Christian soul.

Therefore, when a Christian dies, don’t begrudge the tears. And don’t belittle the joy in the lover’s eyes.” – John Piper

“As Romans tells us, “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). It is not a good thing that our Christian friend or family member has passed away. No matter the benefits after death, death *itself* is an abomination. Death is an unwelcomed guest. It had no place in creation. Rather, it stormed onto the scene as the thief of life upon the entrance of sin into this world. Therefore, death *itself* is not to be celebrated. We cannot merely rejoice when a Christian dies somehow forgetting that death is an enemy.

For God formed man from the dust of the earth. Creation is turned on its head as man is returned to the dust in his death. There has been loss and loss that was not meant to be in this world. There has been death, which had no place in the good creation.

However, we should not merely grieve. When a Christian dies we should also be filled with rejoicing. Truly, for the Christian, “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). As a

believer in Christ departs from this life they are immediately in a far better place (Philippians 1:23). They are with Christ! They have finished the race and kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7); and that faith has become sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). They no longer see in a mirror dimly, but see Him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). The object of their love, affection, and joy is before and with them forevermore.

What glories await the Christian at death. One moment, a feeble sinner experiencing the miseries of this life, and the next moment, one who is adorned with the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8) in the presence of the King of Glory. There the Christian shall be—surrounded by His glory. A glory which banishes all our enemies. In that place there shall no longer be the experience of loss, grief, pain, discomfort, or regret. Rather, the saint shall dwell in sheer joy and bliss as they revel in the beauty and glory of their Savior and God forever. Therefore, we should rejoice at the death of a Christian, for as the Apostle Paul says, they are “in a far better place” (Philippians 1:23). There may be no greater understatement ever penned—for what glories await us!” – Kevin DeYoung

“We should grieve, yet we should have hope; we should wake up from our denial and discover a source of peace that will not leave us; and finally we should laugh and sing” – Tim Keller, “On Death”, (71).

“The death of a believer provides us with a good opportunity to reaffirm our belief in the resurrection of the dead. Though we properly grieve the loss of a loved one because we no longer have fellowship with him on earth, we should also be joyful, because we know that our separation will only be temporary and that those who die in Christ have certainly passed into new life. Do what you can to encourage other believers to rejoice in Christ when Christians die.” Ligonier Article, “Last Respects Jacob”

PRAYER

Thank God for His promises, and the way we can trust Him to carry them through each generation, regardless of the changing world around us. Pray He grants us the desire to surrender ourselves fully to His commands, goodness, and sovereignty over our lives. Pray that as we do so, He makes our lives into a city on a hill—shining His glory to all those around us, establishing a legacy of faith, humility, and grace to be passed along to future generations.



FURTHER STUDY

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/christian-death-mourn-or-celebrate/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/on-death-timothy-keller/>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/when-a-loved-one-goes-home-to-jesus>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/death-shall-we-weep-or-rejoice>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/jacobs-last-words>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/last-respects-jacob>