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**Review:** *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

**NOTE:** In chapter 43 the story of Joseph continued as the famine became more severe in the land of Canaan and Jacob sent his sons back to Egypt to buy more grain. Judah persuaded his father to send Benjamin under his protection as Joseph demanded. On their arrival, Joseph released Simeon from prison and organized a banquet but still did not reveal his identity. In chapter 44 Joseph devised a scheme to keep Benjamin in Egypt by falsely accusing him of theft. The chapter ends with an emotional plea by Judah to release Benjamin and return him to their father, offering to remain as Joseph's slave in his place.

**DAY ONE**

Read Genesis 45:1-15

1. As chapter 45 begins, Joseph wept for the third time (Genesis 42:22-24; 43:29-30). Describe Joseph's response and what finally happened when he was alone with his brothers (verses 1-3).

2a. Joseph repeated the disclosure of his identity a second time telling them, "Come closer to me" (verse 4). What do you think finally compelled Joseph to reveal himself to his brothers?

b. Joseph's elaborate plan involved concealing his identity, keeping his brothers as prisoners and hostages and giving them gifts. What are some problems with using deception in our dealings with others?

3. Joseph told his brothers not to be distressed because "God sent me before you to preserve life" from the famine (verses 5-6). Complete verses 7-8 below in which Joseph explained God's purpose or plan for him. (Good memory verse)

God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth

So it was not you who sent me here

he has made me a father to Pharaoh

**NOTE:** The terms *remnant* and *survivors* often refer to those who survived the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and who were sent into exile. Whoever added this verse drew a worthwhile parallel between God rescuing Jacob's family and God saving the lives of the exiles in Babylon. *Miller*

4. In verse 9 Joseph charged his brothers to return to their father and urge him to come to Egypt without delay. Summarize Joseph's plan for Jacob and his family from verses 10-13.

**NOTE:** Goshen was a fertile plain in the eastern Nile Delta. The land was ideally suited for grazing and shepherding. The Israelites were still settled in this area on the eve of the Exodus (Ex 9:26). *Ignatius Study Bible*

5. After their plan was made, Joseph expressed further affection for Benjamin and his other brothers (verses 14-15). After this emotional scene, his brothers "talked with him," the same brothers who could not "speak peaceably to him" over twenty years earlier (Genesis 37:4). What do you think they talked about? What questions do you think Joseph had for them?

**NOTE:** Chapter 45 ends as Joseph sent his brothers back to their father with carts laden with provisions and a warning not to quarrel along the way. When Jacob heard the news about Joseph, his spirit revived and he resolved to see Joseph.

6. CONNECTION: Joseph sees the hand of God working in his life beginning with his exile from his family telling them "God sent me before you to preserve life." Because of Joseph's faithfulness and God's power, the brothers and all of God's people will be saved. In our lives, it's very tempting to think that we make our own plans and control our own destiny. Yet, God invites us to discern and respond to his plan for our lives just as Joseph did. Can you look back over your life and see God's guidance at work? Have you known God's guidance in your life in unexpected ways?

Read and record 1 Peter 4:19. Write a prayer today asking for the humility and grace to accept God's will for your life.

## DAY TWO

### Read Selected Passages from Genesis Chapters 46-47

**NOTE:** For the next two days, you are directed to read selected passage from chapters 46-48 which relate the story of Jacob and Joseph in greater detail than is needed for our study. While not necessary, you are encouraged to read both chapters in full for a further understanding and appreciation of this story.

7. In chapter 46 Israel (Jacob) left for Egypt with all he had, eager to see the son he thought was dead. Jacob passed through Beer-sheba to offer sacrifices where his father, Isaac, had erected an altar (Genesis 26:25). For the last time, the Patriarch spoke with God who made new promises that predicted future events (verses 1-4). Read and summarize the relevant passage from one of the following verses.

Genesis 50:1-2 (Joseph's own hand shall close your eyes)

Exodus 1:7 (I will make of you a great nation there)

Exodus 12:41-42 (I will also bring you up again)

**NOTE:** A literal reading of biblical chronology puts the beginning of Israel's sojourn in Egypt around 1876 B.C., a full 430 years before the Exodus (Ex 12:40-41). *Ignatius Study Bible*

8. Once again, Jacob left his home for an uncertain future. Think about the times in your life when you left your home on a journey. Comment briefly on the impact that had on your life or the lives of your family members.

9. Israel (Jacob) sent Judah ahead to lead the way to meet Joseph in the land of Goshen (verse 28). Describe the emotional meeting at long last between Jacob and Joseph from verses 29-30.

10a. As we begin chapter 47, Joseph has settled his family in the land of Goshen before presenting them to Pharaoh (verses 1-6). What do you think Joseph's intentions were in establishing his family in this area outside of the Egyptian cities? (See also Genesis 46:32-34)

b. Comment briefly on how God protected and cared for his people, acting even through Pharaoh, to provide for Joseph and his family (verses 7-12).

**NOTE:** In verses 13-26, Egypt plummets into starvation and economic collapse as the famine grinds on. Soon the currency in circulation is depleted, and the Egyptian masses are forced to sell their livestock, lands and even their lives over to Pharaoh. Only Joseph is able to steer them through this crisis and is eventually hailed as a savior (47:25). The impression in verse 27 is that Israel continues to flourish in Goshen even while its host country struggles to survive. *Ignatius Study Bible*

11. We learn that the nation Israel settled in the land of Goshen, and they gained possessions, were fruitful and multiplied there (verse 27). After Jacob lived there 17 years and was 147 (verse 28), he asked Joseph twice to promise to bury him with his ancestors (verses 29-31). Why do you think it was important to Jacob that his body be returned to Canaan?

**NOTE:** This is the first time in scripture that the word, "Israel," was used to refer to the nation of the covenant family and not just the name of the Patriarch. The nation would continue to thrive and grow in Egypt up to the time of Moses when "a new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8).

12. CONNECTION: In verse 9 of chapter 47, Jacob referred to his long life as an earthly sojourn. Journey is an appropriate metaphor for faith and our lives as pilgrims. It focuses on the process of getting somewhere, not the arrival; it implies transition, challenges and adventures. Along the way, we need help and can't usually get where we are going by our own strength but only by trusting, seeking guidance and having companions. Do you see yourself on a faith journey right now? What challenges confront you? What has helped you on your journey?

Read and record a verse from Psalms 23 that reflects your faith journey at this time. Let this thought lead you into prayer today.

### **DAY THREE**

#### **Read Selected Passages from Genesis Chapter 48**

**NOTE:** Jacob continues his preparations for death. In a scene that evokes the nearly blind Isaac blessing Jacob and Esau (chap.27), Jacob blesses Joseph's two sons. He adopts them, elevating them to a status equal to that of Jacob's first sons, Reuben and Simeon. The adoption is one more instance of Jacob's favoring Rachel and those born of her. Since her early death prevented her from having more than two sons (verse 7), Jacob feels justified in treating her two grandsons as if they were her own offspring. *NABRE*

13. Chapter 48 begins another story about Jacob's final days. Joseph was told that his father was ill, so he presented his two sons to his father (verse 1). Jacob related the divine promises to him in verses 3-4. Summarize what Jacob said about Joseph's two sons and his future children (verses 5-7).

**NOTE: There is one minor contradiction at this point. At this meeting, the grandsons seem to be small children, but following the information about how long Jacob lived in Egypt (47:20), they would have been closer to twenty years old. *Miller***

14. Jacob's eyesight was poor so Joseph brought his sons to him and Jacob kissed, embraced and stretched his hands to bless them, his right hand on Ephraim, the younger, and his left on Manasseh, the firstborn (verses 8-14). Read the beautiful blessing Jacob gave to his adopted grandsons in verses 15-16 and record a phrase that reflected the deep faith he developed over his long life.

15. In his blessing Jacob referred to God as "my shepherd" (verse 15). This is the first time in the Bible when God is described as a shepherd and this image continued to be used throughout Scripture. How does that metaphor help you to understand God?

16. Over Joseph's objection, Jacob put the younger son, Ephraim, ahead of his older brother, Manasseh (verses 17-18.). This entitled the younger son to a greater share of inheritance (verses 20 and 22). We have read before how God ignored the ancient customs of preference for the first born son, even in the story of Jacob himself. What have you learned from this repeated theme from the book of Genesis (see 1 Corinthians 1:27-29)?

**NOTE: Ephraim and Manasseh are being put on a par with the two oldest sons of Jacob. The importance of the tribes that will descend from them is explained by the fact that they were adopted by Jacob. None of Joseph's other sons became founders of tribes. The fact that traditionally twelve tribes are spoken about whereas in fact there were thirteen is because Jacob had twelve sons and territory was assigned to twelve tribes (no territory was given to Levi) [because they were given priestly duties rather than land]. *Navarre***

17. Israel (Jacob) made one final prediction to Joseph that God would bring Joseph again to the land of his ancestors (verse 21). Look up Exodus 13:19 and record how this promise would be fulfilled.

18. **CONNECTION:** After many years of separation, Joseph was with his father near the end of his life. Jacob bestowed blessings on Joseph and his sons and they spoke of many things. This must have been a satisfying experience for the faithful Joseph who had lived his life far away from his father and for Jacob to be with a beloved son he thought had died. Being with someone during their final days on this earth are special times and gifts of grace. Can you share a story of being with someone at the very end of life and of any words or blessings that made this time memorable?

In Matthew 5:4, Jesus tells us that, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Let these words from the Sermon on the Mount lead you to into prayer today.

#### DAY FOUR

Read Genesis 49:1-33

**NOTE:** In chapter 49 the twelve sons of Jacob gather around his deathbed to receive his blessing. The benedictions, uttered in poetic verse, are prophetic oracles about the future of the tribes of Israel. Allusions are made to the occupation of Canaan under Joshua and the Judges, the rise of the Israelite monarchy under David and his successors, and the dawning of the messianic age. The names of the sons are grouped according to their respective mothers. *Ignatius Study Bible*

19. In chapter 49, Jacob called his sons together and addressed them beginning with the sons of Leah. Though Reuben, his firstborn, excelled in rank and power, Jacob called him "unstable as water" and predicted he would "no longer excel" (verses 1-4). In verses 5-7 he included equally dire predictions for his second and third sons, Simon and Levi. Record his final words to them in verse 7.

**NOTE:** Jacob's oldest son, Reuben is rebuked for his pride and sexual aggression, having disgraced his father by sleeping with his concubine, Bilhah (35:22). This made him unfit to receive the honored blessing of the first-born (1 Chronicles 5:1). *Ignatius Study Bible*

20a. Jacob's first words of praise were given to his fourth son, Judah (verses 8-12). Record one or two verses from this passage that refers to the future role he and his tribe will have as leaders and kings.

b. Judah, of all the sons of Jacob, was destined to become heir to the promise. Look up and record the relevant passage in one of the following verses that reference his destiny.

1 Chronicles 5:2

Matthew 1:1-2

Revelation 5:5

21. The next 6 sons (tribes) were described in verses 13- 21 with varying images. Pick one of these tribes and record what is said about it and what you think the imagery might mean.

22. Of all the sons (tribes), only Joseph was explicitly blessed by Jacob. Record one of these blessings from verses 22- 26.

**NOTE: One cannot help noticing how much is said about Joseph, presumably on account of the preceding chapters and the importance of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who occupied the central part of Palestine. The wild and warlike character of the tribe of Benjamin can be seen from the history of that tribe as recounted in Judges 3:15. *Navarre***

23. In verses 27-28, Jacob ended his blessing of the twelve tribes of Israel as he celebrated the courage of the youngest son, Benjamin, beloved by all, which was also the smallest of all the tribes of Israel. Do you think Benjamin's qualities reflected his role as the youngest of twelve brothers? Do you think birth order brings out certain traits in family members?

**NOTE: [Verses 29-33 describe Jacob's death and burial.] When we hear Jacob on his deathbed, we know that nearly all his words are anachronistic, out of their proper time. The time of slavery and of gradual conquest of Canaan would be slow. Five hundred years or more would pass before the kingdom of David firmly ruled in the holy land. Yet Jacob's words lit up these mottos and hopes. This perch in the Jacob/Joseph cycle was a place to preserve some tribal lore, and a place to unite the patriarchal period with that of the judges. They were united, not by humans, but by God. *Miller***

24. CONNECTION: Today we read Jacob's last words to his sons, some of which were blessings and praise but other words were harsh. The attitude of parents toward their children can affect, for good or ill, the kinds of persons their children will become. In what ways have the attitudes of your parents affected the course of your life? How can we support parents we know to help them raise their children relying on the teachings of Christ? Share some thoughts with your group.

In Colossians 3:21 parents are counseled, "do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart." Today pray for all parents that they may reflect Christ's love for their children.

## **DAY FIVE**

**Read Genesis 50:1-14**

25. As the last chapter of the Book of Genesis begins, Jacob has died. How did his son, Joseph, now about thirty-nine years old, react to this sad event according to verse 1?

26. Joseph commanded that his father's body be embalmed for burial (verses 2-3). Embalming is only mentioned in the Old Testament in reference to Jacob and Joseph (verse 26). The Egyptian art of mummification was a long and expensive process of dehydrating the body, applying spices and preservatives and wrapping it with strips of linen (*Ignatius Study Bible*). What do these details about their deaths tell you about Joseph, Jacob and their life in Egypt?

27. After the days of mourning were over, Joseph received permission from Pharaoh to fulfill his oath to bury his father in Canaan (verses 4-6). Describe one or two things from the great company that accompanied Joseph and the body of Jacob up to Canaan from verses 7-9. Comment on how this entourage reflected Joseph's status.

28. The elaborate process of burial and mourning for Jacob was described in verses 10-13. What particular elements of our modern funeral rituals affect you the most or hold the most meaning for you?

29. After burying their father, Joseph and his brothers returned to Egypt (verse 14). How were Joseph's actions with regard to the death and burial of his father an example of the commandment to honor our parents?

**NOTE: Several hundred years later, when a different author wished to describe another virtuous Joseph, all would see in this honorable man, Joseph of the Old Testament. When St. Matthew penned his Gospel in the mid-first Century for the Jewish Christians of his community, no doubt they remembered the first Joseph. The New Testament Joseph, like his Old Testament counterpart, was a paragon of goodness. *Commentary, page 73.***

30. CONNECTION: Our Commentary compares the goodness and virtue of Joseph to another Joseph in the New Testament. St. Joseph was a loving spouse to Mary and earthly father to Jesus as he faithfully complied with all that the Lord asked of him. How does the life of Joseph remind you of the virtues of St. Joseph? How do you honor St. Joseph and make devotion to him part of your spiritual life? Record some thoughts to share.

In your prayer time today, reflect on how St. Joseph witnessed how "Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor" (Luke 2:52). Read the following prayer taken from the Apostolic Letter of The Holy Father Francis given in Rome on December 8, 2020.

*Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man. Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen.*



## DAY SIX

Read Genesis 50:15-26

31. Today we begin the final lesson of the book of Genesis. Having just buried their father, what thought came to the brothers in verse 15?

**NOTE:** The story of Joseph's brothers asking again for forgiveness (50:15-21) may not be expected, but often family relationships change significantly after the death of a dominant parent. The story assumes that there was true forgiveness and reconciliation in chapters 45-46. Even so, the passage allows the readers to reflect once again on God's role in the lives of this family. God turned their rejection of Joseph into the rescue of a whole people! *Miller*

32. Fearful that Joseph might still hold a grudge against them, the brothers devised another scheme to manipulate him. Summarize their words of deception and his response (verses 16-18).

33a. Joseph's reply to them reflected on God's mercy and wisdom. Which of the following words of reconciliation do you think was most reassuring and why from verses 19-21? (Good memory verses)

Do not be afraid!

Am I in the place of God?

Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today.

**THINK:** Why is it important that Joseph gives all credit to God?

b. Why do you think that Joseph was not angry with his brothers for what they had done? How was his behavior towards them a model of true forgiveness?

34. God was good to Joseph and his father's household as they remained in Egypt. Describe his life according to verses 22-23.

35. After Joseph died, he was embalmed and placed in a coffin. As we read in verses 24-26, his last words were a prediction to his brothers that "God will surely come" and return them to the Promised Land. Record Joshua 24:32 that describes how his descendants honored their promise to return his body there.

36. **CONNECTION:** As we come to the end of the book of Genesis, we complete the stories of the ancient peoples, the ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel, who will someday leave Egypt with Moses to settle in the land promised to them by God. Think back over the men and women about whom we have read. Were any concepts or sections difficult for you? What stories, characters or lessons from this book are most memorable to you or helped you grow in relationship with God? Share your thoughts with your group.

Read Hebrews 12:1-2. Today, think about the faith of the “great cloud of witnesses” we have read about in Genesis as you pray to Jesus, in whom the New Covenant is fulfilled.

**NOTE:** After Genesis, the promises of the LORD and his covenants with his people continue to be fulfilled as the history of the Israelite people unfolds in Scripture. During the Exodus, the Mosaic covenant helped to build the family of Israel into a nation. The LORD’s promise continued with the Davidic covenant, in which God established David, Judah’s heir, as king. Finally, the divine promise comes to fulfillment in the New Covenant with Jesus Christ as the Messiah and descendant of Abraham.

Read pages 72-76 in *The Book of Genesis* by Lawrence DiPaolo, Jr., Ph.D. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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