

**JOSEPH**  
**Deathbed Confessions**  
**Genesis 48**

We are coming close to the end of our series on Joseph, which is truly a series not just about Joseph, but about his entire family and the unfolding of God's redemptive plan through the nation of Israel. This story has taken us from Canaan to Egypt and back multiple times, but in these last two chapters, we are brought into the somber setting of an old man's bedside in his dying moments. This intimate picture however, is anything but dark and grim. Instead, it is filled with love and worship and a confident sense of hope and faith. Jacob is looking into the future by faith, and he affirms the certainty of God's promises and presence with his descendants for generations to come! I invite you to come into this quiet bedside setting with me as we observe how faithful men die with a living hope! **Genesis 47:28 – 48:22 NIV**

28 Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years, and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven. 29 When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, 30 but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried." "I will do as you say," he said. 31 "Swear to me," he said. **Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.** . . . 1 Some time later Joseph was told, "Your father is ill." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim along with him. 2 When Jacob was told, "Your son Joseph has come to you," **Israel rallied his strength and sat up on the bed.** 3 **Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed me** 4 and said to me, 'I am going to make you fruitful and increase your numbers. I will make you a community of peoples, and I will give this land as an everlasting possession to your descendants after you.' 5 "Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine. 6 Any children born to you after them will be yours; in the territory they inherit they will be reckoned under the names of their brothers. 7 As I was returning from Paddan, to my sorrow Rachel died in the land of Canaan while we were still on the way, a little distance from Ephrath. So I buried her there beside the road to Ephrath" (that is, Bethlehem). 8 When Israel saw the sons of Joseph, he asked, "Who are these?" 9 "They are the sons God has given me here," Joseph said to his father. **Then Israel said, "Bring them to me so I may bless them."** 10 Now Israel's eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see. **So, Joseph brought his sons close to him, and his father kissed them and embraced them.** 11 Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face again, and now God has allowed me to see your children too." 12 Then Joseph removed them from Israel's knees and bowed down with his face to the ground. 13 And Joseph took both of them, Ephraim on his right toward Israel's left hand and Manasseh on his left toward Israel's right hand, and brought them close to him. 14 But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn. 15 Then he blessed

Joseph and said, **"May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked faithfully, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, 16 the Angel who has delivered me from all harm --may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly on the earth."** 17 When Joseph saw his father placing his right hand on Ephraim's head he was displeased; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 Joseph said to him, "No, my father, this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head." 19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He too will become a people, and he too will become great. Nevertheless, his younger brother will be greater than he, and his descendants will become a group of nations." 20 He blessed them that day and said, "In your name will Israel pronounce this blessing: 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh.'" So he put Ephraim ahead of Manasseh. 21 **Then Israel said to Joseph, "I am about to die, but God will be with you and take you back to the land of your fathers. 22 And to you I give one more ridge of land than to your brothers, the ridge I took from the Amorites with my sword and my bow."**

### **JACOB CONFESSED THE FAITHFULNESS OF ALMIGHTY GOD**

**Jacob focused his first words to Joseph on the PERSON and PROMISES of God.**

At the very beginning of his final conversation with Joseph (48:3), Jacob reminds Joseph that God Almighty [El Shaddai] had APPEARED to him when he was a much younger man. (Genesis 28). [El Shaddai was the NAME that ISAAC had used when he BLESSED Jacob just before God appeared to him at Bethel.] During the course of his 147 years, Jacob clearly saw that God was truly the Almighty One who was more than "sufficient" for meeting every need that Jacob ever had! Almighty God made amazing promises to Jacob even after he had STOLEN the BLESSING of ISAAC from his brother, Esau! **Jacob LEARNED that God was sovereign over these privileges that he had worked so hard to obtain by fraud.** This is evident by the way that Jacob stresses God's REPEATED words to him (Vs. 4): **"I AM going to make you fruitful . . . , and I WILL make you a community of peoples . . . , and I WILL give you this land . . ."** **These are words of DIVINE DETERMINATION, and not HUMAN MANIPULATION.** God's word will not be altered or obstructed. Jacob knows this now more than ever, since what ultimately took place in his son's lives was beyond his (or anyone else's) ability to control. **Jacob was stressing this to Joseph and his sons so that their faith would be strengthened! In fact, Jacob went on to GLORIFY God by expressing the MANIFOLD ways that God had LED him throughout his often-dysfunctional life!**

**Jacob recounted God's preeminence in his life in three aspects. [Genesis 48:15-17]** He confessed that God was the One "before whom [his] fathers – Abraham and Isaac – had walked faithfully." God was also the "God who has been [his] Shepherd all the days of his life." Finally, God was "the Angel who has delivered [him] from all harm." In such a surprising way, Jacob proves to be a man of STRONG FAITH here in his final years! He actually FINISHES WELL. **It is meaningful to me that I**

struggled to see Jacob's faith during the time when Joseph was taken from him. He looked like a defeated man who had nothing left of spiritual worth to offer anyone during that time. But even in his times of weakness, Jacob still walked before God, followed God's leading, and recognized God's redemptive power over all trouble. How encouraging is that?

Jacob's first confession about God (Vs.15a) refers to the fact that God was faithful to his COVENANT with Jacob's grandfather and his father, and now to him. He made himself known and ACCESSIBLE, seen by the fact that these men were allowed to "WALK BEFORE HIM" throughout their lifetimes. He gave them whatever REVELATION they needed so that they could walk with him in those dark days when the Word of God was not yet written down. The idea of walking before God implies a level of INTIMACY.

Jacob's second confession of faith about God (Vs. 15b) reveals the faithful LEADERSHIP of God in his life. Jehovah is my SHEPHERD. King David would write extensively about this in the years to come, and Jesus would fully reveal its depth when he came, but Jacob was the FIRST to express this name and trait of God! It is amazing to think that Jacob, who had been such a DECEIVER and TRICKSTER in stealing his own blessing and birthright, realized that God was his Shepherd all along. And, as a shepherd himself, he KNEW how difficult sheep can be!

Jacob's third confession of faith (Vs. 16) reveals God as the REDEEMER. The word "delivered" that Jacob uses here is actually the word for "redemption from trouble." Jacob states that the Angel of God (a THEOPHANY of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity – Jesus Christ!) was the one that "redeemed him from all harm." This implies that God did not remove trouble from him, but that he redeemed him in the midst of all that trouble. God delivered him twice from harm by his brother, Esau. God delivered him from harm by his Uncle Laban. God delivered Jacob repeatedly from enemies in the land of Canaan, and God delivered him from the harm of the 7-year famine when it ravaged the world around them. God did not just "get him out of some tight spots" in those moments, he actually USED every one of those dangers to accomplish his sovereign plan in Jacob's life and to teach him to TRUST.

## JACOB BLESSED HIS DESCENDANTS BY FAITH

Jacob acknowledged his imminent DEATH without fear or trepidation.

He had lived 147 years (17 of them in Egypt), and he still had told Pharaoh that those years were "short and difficult." So, it is true for us as well. No matter how long we live, our lives are like a VAPOR. Beautifully, Jacob saw BEYOND his own life to the lives of his descendants, and he wanted to direct them toward the God that had been faithful to him so that they would serve him long after he was gone. Death was not the END for Jacob. When Jacob dies, Scripture says that "he was gathered to his people." This was not a reference to his body, but to his soul. When Jacob made Joseph swear to bring his bones to the Promised Land to bury him with Abraham and Isaac, he spoke

of “resting with his fathers.” He was no longer going to have to face the troubles we see on this earth. He would be with the God of Abraham and Isaac, the God of the Living and not the dead (as Jesus said!). Praise his name!

**Jacob strengthened himself for his final responsibility as a father.**

Jacob “rallied his strength and sat upright in his bed” for the final meeting with his son, Joseph. This may seem insignificant, but it is actually noteworthy! **Jacob realized that the time for blessing was right then, because the opportunity would be LOST once he had died. In fact, this was the one moment in Jacob’s life that is mentioned in the Hall of Faith: Hebrews 11:21 NIV**

**21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.**

Jacob’s strength was waning fast as he lay dying, but he knew that this moment was essential to the future of his LEGACY. He would not miss this moment. **Furthermore, it was an act of WORSHIP that preceded the blessing of Joseph’s sons. (Genesis 47:31)** Jacob had several experiences of worship in his lifetime that we know of; others that we will never know. But Jacob was a WORSHIPPER. **Worship kept bringing him back to a place of HUMILITY and DEPENDENCE upon God.** In that atmosphere of worship, Jacob was able to remember and carry out his last acts of OBEDIENCE to God from his deathbed! That is the way to finish well. So many people MISS THE MOMENT of BLESSING. They count it as unimportant or they prioritize other things above it, never taking the time to PREPARE and then PASS ON that which is entirely THIERS to proffer to others. Others pass on wealth or possessions, but fail to pass on their faith. Tragedy!

**Jacob ADOPTED Manasseh and Ephraim as his own sons, thus DOUBLING Joseph’s portion as the firstborn of Rachel.**

Jacob had every right to do this because God had made the promise to HIM even as he had made it to Abraham and Isaac before him, thus personalizing it for Jacob to distribute as the father of MULTIPLE sons! **Joseph’s sons would be known from this point onward as Ephraim Ben Jacob and Manasseh Ben Jacob.**

**Jacob demonstrated the tender heart of a father when he gave Manasseh and Ephraim the gift of physical touch.**

One of the key aspects of a biblical blessing is the concept of physical touch. **The one giving the blessing had to TOUCH the one being blessed for the transfer of spiritual and physical properties to be complete.** Again, this may seem insignificant, but it is extremely important! Physical touch that is a pure and loving act of imparting worth and connection to another is essential to human life. Human touch has been shown to be a key component in the health of developing babies. It is the longing of every human being, and can be a very emotional experience for those that have not tasted it much in their lives. **I think of how LEPERS responded to Jesus when he touched them as he healed them. What a blessing!** Touch can be a CURSE when it

is selfish or manipulative, but it is HEALING and JOY when it is an expression of genuine LOVE.

Your children never stop needing the blessing of touch. Even now as I myself am almost 60 years old, I find great comfort in an embrace from my mother and father! How many of you here would love to have one more chance to embrace your parent who is now long since passed on? Oh, do not fail to give your family the blessing of holy touch! May it communicate the love and presence of God to them in this dark and harsh world.

**Jacob spoke as a PROPHET when he crossed his hands and blessed Ephraim over Manasseh. (Vss. 17-20)**

Jacob did no disservice to Manasseh. He only spoke that which God revealed to him. Both boys would become great in size and strength, but Ephraim (fruitful) would be greater than Manasseh (forgetful). Joseph struggled to see this. He thought that the birthright should belong to the firstborn, but just as it had passed to him rather than to Reuben and Simeon, so it would pass to one other than his own firstborn. **God trumps tradition! In fact, this giving of the blessing to one other than the firstborn was the FOURTH time that this had happened in their history as a nation.** God commanded Abraham to bless Isaac over Ishmael. Even though it was through trickery, God allowed Isaac to bless Jacob over Esau. Jacob then blessed Joseph over Reuben. And now Ephraim is blessed over Manasseh. Although Joseph was clearly a man of faith, he had a hard time letting go of his own expectations. But God led Jacob to speak a truth that would be revealed in real history when the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh left Egypt 400 years later and entered the promised land afterwards. History showed the second-born to be greater than the first-born. **Jacob had truly HEARD from God!**

**God's blessings on us are not DIMINISHED when he chooses to bless another in a more significant way.** We live in an age when people think it is UNFAIR for one person to be blessed or favored above another in wealth or rank or privilege. This is simply not true. My status is not lessened when another is exalted above me. **I must find my satisfaction in knowing that God's blessings are more than ABUNDANT for me, and that they serve HIS PURPOSES in and through my life.** **May I never begin to COMPARE my blessings to another's for the purpose of finding my VALUE.** God's blessings are infinitely varied, and to each he sovereignly chooses what he will bestow on them. **We should take great joy in realizing not how we have been blessed in comparison to others, but in simply knowing that God himself has blessed us!**

Jacob not only recounted the faithfulness and blessings of God throughout his lifetime on his deathbed, he passed on those blessings and the knowledge of that faithfulness to his descendants. We must do no less in our own lives to those around us.

Let's pray.

**JOSEPH**  
**Olive Branch Week 9 Facilitation Guide**  
**Deathbed Confessions**

**Start talking**

Talk about some elderly person that you have known that has impressed you with their faith, and why it impacted you so much.

**Start thinking.**

How has growing older affected your faith?

**Start sharing.**

[Read Genesis 48:3, 15-16.](#) How did Jacob make God alone the main focus of his conversation with Joseph? Discuss the names and characteristics of God that Jacob used in these verses. How would you characterize the faithfulness of God in your own life?

[Read Genesis 48:8-16 and Hebrews 11:21.](#) What does it mean to bless someone? How was it an act of faith in this passage? Why was the blessing such an important moment in Israel's history? What would it look like for you to bless your children?

[Read Genesis 48:10.](#) Why is physical touch so important? How can you honor and bless others through physical touch at this stage in your life?

[Read Genesis 48:17-20.](#) Why do you think Joseph was so upset when Jacob blessed Ephraim over Manasseh? What is the danger of comparing God's blessings on your life to his blessings on others? How do the blessings of God reveal his sovereign purposes?

**Start praying.**

Pray specifically for the faith of your children (physical or spiritual) by name out loud in group.

**Start doing.**

This week, bless someone by sharing God's faithfulness in your life with them.