

THE BEGINNING

FROM JACOB TO ISRAEL

FALL

Lesson 06

OCTOBER 12, 2025

LESSON TEXT

Genesis 37–50

FOCUS VERSE

Genesis 50:20

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

TRUTH ABOUT COVENANT

God empowered Joseph to live faithfully for Him in unfavorable circumstances.

MY RESPONSE TO COVENANT

I will not be distracted by detours on the journey to my purpose.

COVENANT CONTEXT

Jacob's favorite son Joseph was betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery, but God was with him and eventually promoted him to second-in-command in the land of Egypt. Through Joseph's faithfulness, God preserved His covenant He had made with His people.

TEACHING OUTLINE

Icebreaker: If you could dream one dream over again, what might it be about?

Teacher Tip: Connect the group's answers to the impact Joseph's dreams had on him and the entire nation of Israel.

Lesson Connection: Share the Lesson Connection. (I)

I. JOSEPH'S MANY HARDSHIPS

A. Betrayed by Brothers

DISCUSS: How might envy undermine your ability to be faithful to God and to others in your present circumstances?

B. Faced with Hardships

C. I will trust God though I face hardships as I journey toward my purpose.

DISCUSS: Can you point to a time in your life when hardship and difficulty proved to be part of

God's plan? How did you discover it was part of God's plan?

II. JOSEPH SUCCESSFULLY LIVED FOR GOD IN EGYPT

- A. Maintained His Integrity (V)
- B. Faithful and Forgiving

***DISCUSS:** How do forgiveness and faithfulness work together? How does unforgiveness undermine faithfulness?*

- C. I will remain humble and persevere just as Joseph did.

***DISCUSS:** What biblical promises encourage you during difficult times?*

III. FAITHFULNESS PRESERVED THE COVENANT

- A. A Tense Reunion
- B. Faithfulness Wins the Day
- C. I will live in covenant even in a hostile environment.

***DISCUSS:** Why do you think faithfulness is more valuable than talent, intelligence, or education?*

Internalizing the Message

PRAYER FOCUS

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- For God to help us to be faithful in the face of difficulty and temptation
- For character and integrity so our lives will honor God

LESSON CONNECTION

Jan Borysovykh Koum was born in Kyiv, Ukraine, back when the country was part of the Soviet Union. The Koums were poor, and Jan was raised in a home with no running water. The school he attended as a child did not have an indoor bathroom. Koum recalls that he and his classmates had to go outside in the freezing cold of Soviet winters to use the restroom.

In 1992 when Koum was sixteen, he and his mother relocated to Mountain View, California. Mountain View is located in California's Silicon Valley, a region that already was a hub of technological advancement in the early 1990s. Although they were surrounded by wealth, Koum and his mother struggled, relying on food stamps and welfare to supplement their low-paying jobs. Koum began teaching himself about computers. He wasn't a great student (Koum admits he barely graduated from high school), but he did enroll at San Jose State University. He also landed a job in cybersecurity at Ernst & Young, one of the so-called Big Four accounting firms. During this time Koum met Brian Acton, who worked at Yahoo. Soon afterward, Koum also landed a job at Yahoo, and he and Acton spent the next nine years working together at the search engine giant.

In late 2007, Koum and Acton decided to take time off and travel across South America. When they returned to California the following year, Koum and Acton both applied for jobs with the social media platform Facebook, which was just getting started. Neither was hired. In January 2009 Koum bought an iPhone. At the time, Apple's App Store was only seven months old, but Koum quickly recognized its significance. In late February, Koum

launched a business that would offer a new communications app for smartphones called “WhatsApp.” Acton joined the startup shortly thereafter and became one of WhatsApp’s cofounders.

It didn’t take long for WhatsApp to become popular with smartphone users, especially those outside the United States. By 2012 WhatsApp had caught the attention of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, whose company had declined to hire either Koum or Acton in 2008. After two years of negotiations, Zuckerberg agreed to purchase WhatsApp for \$19 billion. As an acknowledgment of the financial struggles he and his mother faced in earlier years, Koum symbolically signed the acquisition agreement on the door of the welfare office where they once received assistance (businessinsider.com). Though he was born into poverty and political oppression, Koum is now one of the wealthiest men in Silicon Valley. WhatsApp continues to be extremely popular with an estimated two billion users in 180 countries as of mid-2024.

Rags-to-riches stories such as Koum’s often have us daydreaming about what could happen in our own lives. But we don’t usually think of the years of struggle, poverty, and uncertainty individuals such as Koum endured on their way to success. The Bible offers its own version of a rags-to-riches story in Genesis 37–50. Joseph, one of the twelve sons of Israel, went from favorite son to slave to prisoner. Then in a dramatic turn of events, he became the second-in-command over one of the most powerful nations on earth. Joseph persevered through several injustices, and his life serves as a witness to the power of faithfulness in the face of difficulty.

BIBLE LESSON

I. JOSEPH’S MANY HARDSHIPS

Living in covenant does not exempt us from tough times, as the story of Joseph illustrates. Genesis 37 introduces the teenage Joseph with signs pointing to troubles he will face in ensuing chapters. As we explored in last week’s lesson, his brothers hated him because Jacob made no attempt to hide that Joseph was his favorite son. The sight of the multicolored coat Jacob gifted Joseph made his brothers seethe with envy. Finally, Joseph had two dreams in which the members of his family bowed down to him. After he shared those dreams with his family, his brothers hated him even more.

A. Betrayed by Brothers

Considering all this—and what we have already learned about envy and sibling rivalry—it is not surprising that Genesis reports Joseph’s brothers “conspired against him to slay him” (Genesis 37:18). They caught him and threw him into a dry well to die. Reuben, the oldest brother, planned to come back later and save him, but another brother, Judah, suggested they sell Joseph as a slave to Midianite merchants. To cover their evil, they stripped Joseph of his precious coat, dipped it in goat’s blood, and presented it to their father, leading him to believe his favorite son had been mauled by a wild animal. Their father believed their lie and immediately withdrew into grief. Sin continued to scar humanity and ruin relationships.

For just twenty pieces of silver—the price of a slave—Joseph’s brothers committed one of the Bible’s most despicable acts of betrayal. To compound their evil, these brothers were all descendants of Abraham. They had been

called by God to live in covenant with Him and each other. But their envy and hatred caused them to forget who they were supposed to be, and they sold their own brother because they were jealous of him.

***DISCUSS:** How might envy undermine your ability to be faithful to God and to others in your present circumstances?*

B. Faced with Hardships

Surprisingly, Joseph did not spiral into self-pity, nor was he consumed with a desire for revenge—even after such a painful betrayal. After a brief interlude, Genesis shines the spotlight back on Joseph, informing us the Midianites sold him to an Egyptian officer named Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh’s guard. Some scholars believe Potiphar was Pharaoh’s personal bodyguard or even led Pharaoh’s executioners. Joseph decided to make the best of a terrible situation, and he faithfully served Potiphar. Genesis 39:2 records the faithfulness of God to a faithful Joseph: “The LORD was with Joseph.”

C. I will trust God though I face hardships as I journey toward my purpose.

Joseph could not have realized it at the time, but his betrayal and slavery were part of a much larger plan God had in place for Abraham’s descendants. God was using Joseph to eventually save his entire family from a deadly worldwide famine. He chose Joseph for this difficult task because He knew the young man’s character would not crack under the tremendous pressures he would face in the meantime. Although his brothers displayed their depravity through betrayal and deception, Joseph remained faithful.

Like Joseph, we will not understand the full scope of what God is doing in our lives until we reach Heaven. Meanwhile, we must trust that God knows what He is doing and He will ultimately redeem our sufferings for His glory. Like the apostle Paul, we can trust that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

***DISCUSS:** Can you point to a time in your life when hardship and difficulty proved to be part of God’s plan? How did you discover it was part of God’s plan?*

II. JOSEPH SUCCESSFULLY LIVED FOR GOD IN EGYPT

Somehow Joseph never forgot he had a responsibility to the God who had called him and his family to live in covenant with Him. This understanding empowered him to respond to every difficulty by walking in faithfulness and integrity. God honored Joseph by blessing everything he did. Whether in Potiphar’s house or, later, an Egyptian prison, “the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour” (Genesis 39:21).

A. Maintained His Integrity

Suddenly, the story turned against Joseph yet again. He “was handsome in form and appearance,” and he soon caught the eye of Potiphar’s wife. She repeatedly attempted to tempt him, but Joseph refused her advances. One day she would not be ignored. When the two were alone in the house, Potiphar’s wife brazenly made advances toward Joseph. Rather than caving to temptation, Joseph fled from the house.

She was outraged. He had refused her, ignored her, and now he had spurned her. She wove a tale that he tried to take advantage of her, and her husband threw Joseph into prison. Joseph should have been applauded; he was imprisoned. But we read the familiar, comforting refrain of God's faithfulness: "The LORD was with Joseph." Many people would have caved to the pressure and justified their sin as a bit of payback for all their trouble. Not Joseph—he was committed to living with integrity before God, regardless of the consequences.

B. Faithful and Forgiving

Though he was imprisoned on a false accusation, Joseph refused to give in to despair. He served his prison sentence like he had served when he was enslaved in Potiphar's house: work hard, trust God, and see what happens. The keeper of the prison soon recognized that Joseph was not an ordinary prisoner and began assigning him the care and oversight of other prisoners. Once again, "the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper" (Genesis 39:23).

This did not mean everything went Joseph's way while he was in prison. When two of his fellow inmates dreamed, Joseph correctly interpreted their dreams. The butler was released just as Joseph promised, but he forgot Joseph for two long years. Once again, Joseph refused to succumb to resentment. Instead, he remained faithful to his prison duties and to God.

***DISCUSS:** How do forgiveness and faithfulness work together? How does unforgiveness undermine faithfulness?*

C. I will remain humble and persevere just as Joseph did.

Joseph's example of humility and perseverance in the face of betrayal and injustice reminds us of our responsibility to do the same. Jesus warned His followers: "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). Like Joseph, Jesus was betrayed by a close friend and imprisoned on false charges. As His followers, we can expect people to treat us unfairly. They may lie on us, falsely accuse us, even betray us. Things will not always work out for the best, at least in the short term.

But Jesus did add these words of encouragement: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus lived with integrity and stayed faithful to His mission, even when it meant suffering and dying on a cross for other people's sins—including ours. In the same manner, Jesus empowers us to persevere in the face of injustice and hardship. In the end, we can say along with Paul who was also falsely accused, "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (II Corinthians 2:14).

***DISCUSS:** What biblical promises encourage you during difficult times?*

III. FAITHFULNESS PRESERVED THE COVENANT

The bulk of the Book of Genesis is dedicated to sharing how God established and preserved His covenant with Abraham and his descendants despite peoples' many missteps. No matter how faithless they were, God remained faithful. Genesis 37–50 detail how God used Joseph to preserve this covenant and God's chosen people despite betrayal, lies, sexual temptation, and injustice. In the same way, God can and will preserve His people today if we

remain faithful.

A. A Tense Reunion

After those two years, Pharaoh himself had a dream, and the butler finally remembered Joseph. Pharaoh called for Joseph, he interpreted the dream, gave the glory to God, and Joseph was promoted to be Egypt's second-in-command. After suffering as a slave and enduring an undeserved prison sentence, Joseph was ruling in the palace. But he did not have much time to celebrate. A famine that would soon consume the land was lurking, and Joseph only had seven years to implement an economic policy that could save Egypt from starvation (Genesis 41:30).

Unbeknownst to Joseph, this famine would force an awkward family reunion. When blight destroyed the crops in Canaan, Jacob and his sons looked to Egypt for food. Jacob's sons headed south to buy food, only to find themselves standing before the brother they had once betrayed...awkward.

Joseph once again proved why God chose him. Instead of raining down revenge, Joseph showed his brothers kindness and mercy. He invited them to live out the famine with him in Egypt, and soon Joseph was embracing his father, who had spent years mourning the death of his favorite son. God had brought the covenant family back together. And Joseph perfectly, faithfully expressed to his brothers his understanding in God's grand story: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

B. Faithfulness Wins the Day

Joseph certainly possessed an abundance of talent, intelligence, and skill, but it was his godly character and integrity—his faithfulness to God—that allowed him to overcome. He faithfully submitted his skills and talents to the hands of God, and God promoted Joseph when the time was right.

In the end, Joseph's faithfulness allowed his family to survive famine and reunite after years of separation. Rather than ending with sadness and regret, Genesis closes on a hopeful note. As Joseph lay on his deathbed following a long and faithful life, he left his family with a parting word of encouragement: "God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Genesis 50:24).

C. I will live in covenant even in a hostile environment.

We live in a hostile environment, surrounded by sin, sickness, and suffering. Talent, intelligence, and skill are valuable, but they are not enough to overcome the challenges of our present age. Faithfulness is still the key to success. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful," Paul wrote in I Corinthians 4:2. The best and the brightest do not always have what it takes, but the one "that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

Keep standing. Stay faithful. Do not be distracted by life's inevitable detours. Don't be resentful when you're treated unfairly. Do not compromise your obedience to God's Word just because it appears to be the easiest option. The same God who preserved Joseph will preserve you. One day soon you will find yourself standing beside Joseph and many others like him, listening as the Master says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been

faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21).

DISCUSS: *Why do you think faithfulness is more valuable than talent, intelligence, or education?*

Teacher Option: *Tell the story below or share one of your own to illustrate how God develops our character through difficult times.*

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

The world of business brims with stories of talented young entrepreneurs with tremendous talent and ambition who were ultimately undone because they lacked character. One recent example is the downfall of Theranos, a consumer healthcare technology company launched in 2003 by Elizabeth Holmes, a nineteen-year-old Stanford dropout. Holmes claimed her company had technology that would revolutionize healthcare by making it possible to test for a wide range of illnesses using just a single drop of blood. Investors poured money into the firm, with Theranos reaching an estimated valuation of \$10 billion. As the company’s founder, Holmes was worth an estimated \$4.5 billion.

Eventually it became clear Theranos was little more than a sham. Media outlets began publishing articles questioning Holmes’s claims about what her company’s technology could accomplish. She pushed back in high-profile media appearances and with legal threats, but soon government agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration began releasing the results of investigations proving the skeptics were right. Investors sued, and Holmes went from billionaire to broke overnight. She was eventually convicted of fraud and sentenced to eleven years in prison. Holmes’s meteoric rise and dramatic downfall have become the subject of books, podcasts, and even a television miniseries.

Rapid promotion like Holmes enjoyed often ends in a dramatic fall. Life’s struggles and difficulties, though unwelcome, help us develop the character we need to manage life’s blessings. Seventeen-year-old Joseph lacked the wisdom and skills necessary to manage the Egyptian economy while rescuing his family from famine. Thirty-year-old Joseph had spent years proving himself in undesirable circumstances. His character had been tested. He had resisted temptation when it seemed it would have been easier to give in. He had been faithful in small matters. When God needed someone to rescue a family and preserve a nation, He knew He could trust Joseph.

What about us? Are we resisting the character development God is attempting to achieve in us by refusing to submit to seemingly humble circumstances? Do we grumble and complain because life is often more difficult than we imagine it should be? Do we struggle to be faithful in small matters? If so, God will not be able to use us in a greater capacity because we will not have the strength of character we need to withstand the pressures that come with higher levels of service.

Do not get distracted or discouraged: God has you right where He wants you. He is testing you, shaping you, forming you into the person He wants you to be. When He is finished, you will be “perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:4, NKJV). And you will be ready to fulfill God’s purpose for which He created you.

