



EAST OF EDEN

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis by Stan Key

Volume 4
Answer Guide



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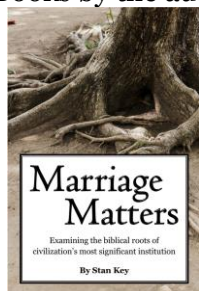
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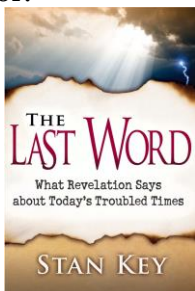
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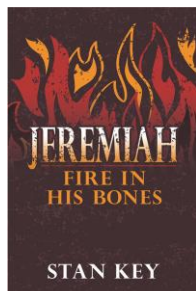
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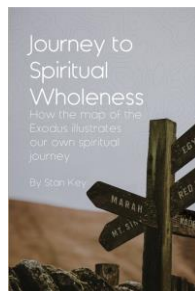
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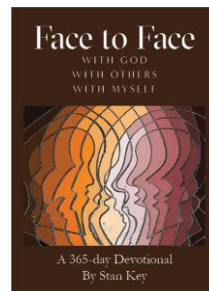
The Last Word



Jeremiah: Fire in His Bones



Journey to Spiritual Wholeness



Face to Face

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East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

THE MAGNIFICENT LIMP

Genesis 32–33

I. Jacob's defining moment

- A. The greatest crisis of Jacob's life was *not* his conflict with his brother Esau or his father-in-law Laban. The greatest antagonist he faced was **God**. Though he had been able to deceive, manipulate and control Esau and Laban, when it came to his wrestling match with God, he finally came to **the end of himself**.
- B. This is not Jacob's first encounter with God. Here at Peniel, he experienced a **second work of grace**. We compared his two experiences in an earlier study:

Bethel (Gn 28:10–22)	Peniel (Gn 32:2–32)
The house of God	The face of God
This is easy—only believe	This is hard—a wrestling match
Change of status	Change of nature
What God does for me	What God does in me
I'm still the old Jacob	I'm a new creation—Israel
It's all about me	It's all about God and his purposes
Justification (first work of grace)	Sanctification (second work of grace)

- C. The key word for this passage is the word **face**. This emphasis is sometimes lost in the English translations:

- Gn 32:20–21, “[Jacob] thought, ‘I may appease Esau [cover his face] with the present that goes ahead of me [before my face], and afterward I shall see his face. Perhaps he will accept me [lift my face].’ So the present passed ahead of him [before his face] and he himself stayed that night in the camp.”
- Gn 32:30, “Jacob called the name of the place Peniel [face of God], saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face and yet my life has been delivered.’”
- Gn 33:10, “For I have seen your face, which is like seeing the face of God”

Jacob is **terrified** at the prospect of *facing up to* his past and of *facing* his estranged brother. This is just too personal, too intimate, too close to home. He prefers to live in denial and avoidance; hiding in the rear behind others (Gn 32:16–21). But when he gets *face to face with God*, all his other fears are immediately reduced in size. When he does see his brother's *face*, he recognizes the likeness of God!

II. Survey of Genesis 32–33

- A. Genesis 32:1–2. Angels!

Twenty years earlier, Jacob had been met by angels as he left Canaan, and now they greet him on his return. As he faces his greatest challenge, God reminds him that the **ladder** is still working, the gate of heaven is still open (see Gn 28:10–17).

B. Genesis 32:3–12. Prayer.

When Jacob learns that Esau is coming to meet him with **400 men**, he is “greatly afraid and distressed.” He divides his family and possessions into two camps and prays like he has never prayed before:

*“O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,’¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.¹¹ Please **deliver me** from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, that he may come and attack me, the mothers with the children.¹² But you said, ‘I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’” (Genesis 32:9–12)*

Humbly acknowledging his **unworthiness**, Jacob reminds God that he is in this place only because he is obeying a clear command. He also reminds God of his promises. The heart of his prayer is a cry for help: “Deliver me!” Jacob’s desperate circumstances have had the beneficial effect of **clearing his thinking** and making him **bold** in prayer!

C. Genesis 32:13–21. A lavish gift.

Some see Jacob’s gift to his brother (550 animals!) as a desperate attempt to buy his favor (a **bribe**). But perhaps it should be understood as a form of **restitution**. Jacob is acknowledging his past sins¹ and seeking to make amends.

D. Genesis 32:22–32. A wrestling match.

Everything about this wrestling match is mysterious. Both Jacob and the reader of the text must **interpret** what it means:

- Who is this “man” wrestling with Jacob?
- Why does he attack Jacob?
- Who won the match?
- Why won’t the wounded hip heal? Why is it permanent?
- What does it all mean?

Because the main part of our lesson will focus on these verses, we will return to these questions in a few minutes.

E. Genesis 33:1–11. Reconciliation.

Rather than getting revenge by killing his brother, Esau embraces and kisses his former enemy in one of the most moving scenes in the entire Bible. God had obviously been working in Esau’s heart, too. Perhaps Jacob’s lavish gift had accomplished its purpose. Perhaps the sight of his bullying, belligerent brother humbly **limping** toward him, caused Esau’s heart to melt. For Jacob, Esau’s **face** reflects the likeness of the One he had wrestled with the night before!

¹ He took advantage of Esau by extorting the birthright (Gn 25:29–34) and by deceitfully stealing the blessing from their father, Isaac (Gn 27).

F. Genesis 33:12–20. Yet distances are respected.

Though reconciled, the brothers recognize they represent **two ways of life** that are very different. They agree to separate. Esau lives in Seir² and Jacob (now called Israel), lives in Shechem where he buys some land and builds an **altar** (not a pillar).

III. Read Genesis 32:22–32 and note the following:

A. This is a **wrestling** match, not a fist fight or a knife fight. The purpose of wrestling with your enemy is not to kill him but to dominate him (control him, manipulate him, pin him to the mat, force him to say “uncle”). Wrestling is a full-body-contact event; it is face-to-face and extremely **intimate**.

B. The fight is **started** by a mysterious “man.” Who is he? What does he want? Why does he attack? Hosea 12:3–4 tells us that he is an angel. When Jacob asks his name, the adversary replies with a mysterious, “Why do you ask?” (“Do I really have to tell you? Don’t you know?”). Jacob’s conclusion about his Adversary’s identity is reflected in the name he gives to the place: Peniel (face of **God**).³

C. This wrestling match with God occurred:

- At night, in the **dark**. It was impossible to see clearly. This demands discernment and faith. “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7).
- When Jacob was **alone**. Neither his mother nor his wives were there to assist or encourage him. This was a battle that had to be fought alone.
- Over a **lengthy period**. While some conflicts can be won in an instant (swords, guns), a wrestling match is long and drawn out. The battle for the surrender of **the will** is typically a long one.

D. The unknown visitor asks Jacob his name⁴. We should not imagine that the questioner does not know the answer. In answering, Jacob is doing more than giving information, he is **confessing** the truth: “I am Jacob; the liar, cheater, deceiver, manipulator.” Jacob is finally **self-aware**. Before he can receive a new nature, he must confess the truth about his old nature.

E. When the conflict’s outcome seems to be pointing to a draw, Jacob’s adversary uses miraculous powers to dislocate his hip. No longer able to wrestle effectively, Jacob can only **cling, hold on**. This new strategy is surprisingly effective, and Jacob wins the wrestling match by losing! He receives a **new name** and a divine **blessing**.

F. Jacob’s wound never heals, and his **limp** remains his most distinctive physical trait for the rest of his life. The handicap has such **significance** that the nation of Israel made it a dietary regulation to refrain from eating “the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket” to help them remember this event forever.

IV. Lessons Learned

A. Our real struggle in life is with **God**.

Like Jacob, we may imagine that our ultimate battles in life are with **other people**, with difficult **circumstances**, or even with **demonic forces**. Not so! If God is indeed sovereign and governs all the affairs of our lives, then our real battle is with

² The descendants of Esau will become the Amalekites (future enemies of the Jews).

³ Whether we are talking about “the angel of the Lord” or the Lord himself in human form, Jacob’s Adversary seems to be a preincarnate physical manifestation of the Second Person of the Trinity.

⁴ We should remember that 20 years earlier Isaac had asked a disguised Jacob the same question, and he lied, saying “I am Esau” (Gn 27:18–19). But now he is finally ready to acknowledge the truth about himself.

Him. Jacob, the consummate controller, had been able to manipulate both people (Esau, Laban, etc.) and events (mating habits of animals, etc.). But on the banks of Jabbok Creek, he discovers that he cannot control God.

- B. Getting right with God precedes getting right with **my brother**.

In God's economy, our **vertical** relationship is intimately connected to our **horizontal** relationships. Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with others cannot be separated. One validates and proves the other.

- C. Victory comes through **surrender**.

In our battle with God, we win by losing! Jacob got the victory and the blessing not by wrestling, but by **clinging**. Our weakness becomes our greatest strength. In our self-despair, we become bold and full of faith. Not my will, thine be done! To see God's face is a **death sentence** (see Ex 33:20).

Jacob did see God face to face, and he did die, so profound a death that God gave him a new name. . . . That is always the test of the reality of sanctification, not so much that I have received something, but that I have ceased to be my old self.⁵

- D. Justification will be incomplete without **sanctification**.

An authentic experience with God at Bethel (Gn 28:10–22) was indispensable for Jacob; but it was incomplete. Without a deeper work of sanctifying grace at Peniel, Jacob's life would have been little more than a human tale of woe. At Peniel, Jacob experienced a **transformation**:

Jacob	Israel
Controls others	Controlled by God
Self-sufficient	God-sufficient
Proud	Humble
Walks with a swagger	Walks with a limp
Knows about God	Knows God face-to-face
Builds pillars	Builds altars
My will be done	Thy will be done
Others see his strength	Others see his weakness
Invincible and threatening	Vulnerable and approachable

- E. Walking with a limp is a **badge of honor**.

Jacob's limp was permanent. It was a tangible reminder (to both him and everyone else!) that he had fought with God; and, he won the battle by **losing**. It was a **magnificent** limp. Think about what it means to walk with a limp:

1. It is **humbling**. An obvious deformity, handicap, and abnormality, limping is not typically associated with strength and beauty.
2. It is **visible**. Though some faults and deformities may be hidden, not so with a limp. Everyone sees it.

⁵ Chambers, *Our Portrait in Genesis*, 977.

3. It is **painful**. Typically, a limp involves a low level of pain that never quite goes away.
4. It **slows one down**. One with a limp may conceivably do most things that non-handicapped people do, but the pace of life is much slower.
5. It makes me **weaker**. My strength is reduced but strangely, “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor 12:10).
6. It is **permanent**. Though God theoretically could heal Jacob of this malady, he chooses not to. Apparently, he believes that Jacob is more effective in his service with the limp than without it (see 2 Cor 12:7–10).
7. It makes one **non-threatening**. Others are quick to approach someone with an obvious handicap because their weakened condition makes them approachable and invites others to come close.

F. Receive the **benediction**:

*The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his **face** to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his **countenance [face]** upon you and give you peace. (Numbers 6:24–26)*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why did Jacob need a “second work” of grace? Does this need exist in the lives of all believers?
2. Does the thought of face-to-face intimacy comfort you or threaten you? Why? How do you feel about getting face-to-face with God?
3. Have you ever seen God’s face in the face of someone else? Talk about this.
4. All God’s saints walk with a limp. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
5. Do you have a limp? What has this lesson taught you about your own limp?

Not by Wrestling, but by Clinging

By J. H. Stuart (1902)

*Not by wrestling, but by clinging
Shall we be most blest;
Wrestling only brings us sorrow;
Clinging brings us rest.*

*When we stay our feeble efforts,
And from struggling cease,
Unconditional surrender
Brings us God’s own peace.*

*Lean we all our weight on Jesus,
Who alone can save;
He by might of love hath triumphed
O’er His willing slave.*

*Yielding, we shall know true conquest;
Dying, we shall live;
“Not my will, but Thine” prevai-leth,
Victory to give.*

Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown

By Charles Wesley (1742)

*Come, O thou Traveler unknown,
whom still I hold, but cannot see!
My company before is gone,
and I am left alone with thee;
with thee all night I mean to stay
and wrestle till the break of day.*

*I need not tell thee who I am,
my misery and sin declare;
thyslf hast called me by my name,
look on thy hands, and read it there.
But who, I ask thee, who art thou?
Tell me thy name, and tell me now.*

*In vain thou strugglest to get free,
I never will unloose my hold;
art yhou the man that died for me?
The secret of thy love unfold;
wrestling, I will not let thee go
till I thy name, thy nature know.*

*Wilt thou not yet to me reveal
thy new, unutterable name?
Tell me, I still beseech thee, tell,
to know it now resolved I am;
wrestling, I will not let thee go,
till I thy name, thy nature know.*

*'Tis all in vain to hold thy tongue
or touch the hollow of my thigh;
though every sinew be unstrung,
out of my arms thou shalt not fly;
wrestling I will not let thee go
till I thy name, thy nature know.*

*What though my shrinking flesh complain,
and murmur to contend so long?
I rise superior to my pain:
when I am weak then I am strong,
and when my all of strength shall fail
I shall with the God-man prevail.*

*My strength is gone, my nature dies,
I sink beneath thy weighty hand,
faint to revive, and fall to rise;
I fall, and yet by faith I stand;
I stand and will not let thee go
till I thy name, thy nature know.*

*Yield to me now -- for I am weak,
but confident in self-despair!
Speak to my heart, in blessing speak,
be conquered by my instant prayer:
speak, or thou never hence shalt move,
and tell me if thy name is Love.*

*'Tis Love! 'tis Love! thou diedst for me,
I hear thy whisper in my heart.
The morning breaks, the shadows flee,
pure, Universal Love thou art;
to me, to all, thy mercies move --
thy nature, and thy name is Love.*

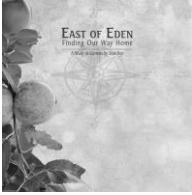
*My prayer hath power with God; the grace
unspeakable I now receive;
through faith I see thee face to face,
I see thee face to face, and live!
In vain I have not wept and strove--
thy nature, and thy name is Love.*

*I know thee, Savior, who thou art,
Jesus, the feeble sinner's friend;
nor wilt thou with the night depart.
but stay and love me to the end:
thy mercies never shall remove,
thy nature, and thy name is Love.*

*The Sun of Righteousness on me
hath rose with healing in his wings:
withered my nature's strength; from thee
my soul its life and succor brings;
my help is all laid up above;
thy nature, and thy name is Love.*

*Contented now upon my thigh
I halt, till life's short journey end;
all helplessness, all weakness I
on thee alone for strength depend;
nor have I power from thee to move:
thy nature, and thy name is Love.*

*Lame as I am, I take the prey,
hell, earth, and sin, with ease overcome;
I leap for joy, pursue my way,
and as a bounding hart fly home,
through all eternity to prove
thy nature, and thy name is Love*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

#METOO¹

Genesis 34:1–31

I. How did this chapter get in the Bible?

A. Genesis 34 is a troubling story about **rape**, **murder**, and **plunder**. There is no mention of **God** anywhere in the text. The author (Moses) makes no attempt to draw a moral lesson from these sad events. The story leaves us feeling confused and unclear. Why, oh, why is this story in the Bible?² Perhaps because:

1. God wants us to **talk about** these things. Sexual assault has been with us from the beginning of time. When it is denied or kept hidden, the damage only escalates.
2. Sexual sins are embarrassing, disturbing, and **confusing**. The lines are often blurry between guilt and innocence, perpetrator and victim. If Genesis 34 makes you feel uncertain about what it all means—welcome to the **real world**.
3. Sometimes the Bible is reticent to state a clear “moral” to a story because God apparently wants *us* to both **interpret** and **apply** the passage! But be assured that with the help of the rest of Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and the Body of Christ, we have all we need to “rightly divide the word of truth” (see 2 Tm 2:15).

B. Genesis 34 is **not easy** to teach/preach. What does it mean? How are we supposed to apply a passage like this? Frankly, I wanted to skip this chapter! But several factors compel me to study and teach this troubling passage:

1. Dinah’s situation represents the reality for millions of women throughout history. Though the main character, she **never speaks**. Others speak to her and for her. In this lesson, we aim to give a voice to the **voiceless**.
2. The recent high-profile examples of sexual predatory behavior by men in authority³ (Harvey Weinstein, Bill Cosby, Larry Nasser, etc.) have made our culture **hyper-sensitive** to the issue of sexual harassment and assault. The #MeToo movement has certainly brought needed attention to a dirty secret in our culture, but at times it has overstated the issue. This study hopes to provide some **sanity** by promoting **biblical reflection** on a troubling social issue of our day.

¹ #MeToo is the name of a movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault. Its goal is to encourage and empower women, especially the young and the vulnerable, to speak up about harmful incidents they may have experienced at work, home, school, the gym, etc.

² For a fuller biblical understanding of rape, compare 2 Samuel 13 (Amnon rapes Tamar) to Genesis 34 (Shechem rapes Dinah). In both stories a young woman is violated, a father is passive and emotionally detached, and brothers (or a brother) take violent revenge.

³ Remember that Shechem, the young man who raped Dinah, was also a high-profile, powerful figure. He was the son of the city’s mayor (Hamor) and “the most honored of all his father’s house” (Gn 34:19).

II. Examine the text

A. Genesis 34:1–4. Dinah is **defiled**.⁴

1. The problems begin when Dinah (a teenager), alone and unprotected, **initiates** contact with the Shechemites⁵ (Gn 34:1). Was she lonely? Curious? Flirting? This is not to **blame the victim**, but her behavior was clearly careless, naïve, and **dangerous**. “Actions taken in innocence are often far from innocent, both in their inner meaning and in their outcome.”⁶
2. The verbs used (Gn 34:2) to describe Shechem’s actions tell the story:
 - He **saw** her. For men, sexual sin nearly always begins with the eyes (Jgs 14:1–3, 7; 16:1, 21; Job 31:1; etc.).
 - He **seized** her. Shechem’s action is forceful and violent. This encounter is non-consensual. Today we might call this “date rape.”
 - He **lay with** her. Hebrew scholars note the word “with” is not present. A better way, perhaps, to describe the event would be to say crudely, “he laid her.”
 - He **humiliated** her. The same word describes Amnon’s behavior with Tamar (2 Sm 13:12, 14, 22, 32); he shamed her, treated her like a whore (Gn 34:31).
3. After the rape, Shechem “loved” Dinah and “spoke tenderly” to her (Gn 34:3). Though his actions are better than Amnon’s (who “hated” Tamar after the rape—2 Sm 13:15), **don’t be fooled**. A man who rapes a woman and then sweet talks her is still a rapist!
4. In speaking of appropriate sexual relations within marriage, the Bible often uses the word “to know” (Gn 4:1, etc.). This word is noticeably absent in Shechem’s relationship with Dinah. For him, Dinah is an **object** to be enjoyed; not a **person** to be known.
5. “Get me this girl for my wife” (Gn 34:4). Shechem is telling his father, “Daddy, please approve my promiscuity; **legitimize** my predatory and violent treatment of women.”

B. Genesis 34:5–7. Jacob is **passive and silent**.

1. On learning of his daughter’s rape, Jacob “holds his peace” (Gn 34:5). He is **emotionally detached**; he says nothing, he takes no action.⁷ Whether caused by shock, sorrow, or fear, his inaction causes him to lose control of the situation. When leaders don’t lead, others rush in to **fill the void**.
2. Dinah’s brothers, however, are “indignant and very angry.” Shechem has done an **outrageous thing**⁸; something that should never happen in Israel (Gn

⁴ The word “defiled” (Gn 34:5, 13) has the sense of contaminated, polluted, rendered unclean.

⁵ Shechem (the young man who raped Dinah) has the same name as the city where he lives and where his father is the “mayor.”

⁶ Kass, 479.

⁷ Jacob’s emotional detachment is noteworthy when compared to his reaction on learning (falsely) that his son Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. In Joseph’s case, Jacob tore his garments, put on sackcloth, and mourned for many days, refusing to be comforted (Gn 37:34–35).

⁸ The word “outrageous thing” occurs 13 times in the Old Testament, eight of which involve sexual crimes (Gn 34:7; Dt 22:21; Jgs 19:23, 24; 20:6, 10; 2 Sm 13:12; Jer 29:23).

34:7; cf. 2 Sm 13:12). The crime is not only against Dinah; it is an attack on the **entire nation**.

- C. Genesis 34:8–12. Hamor proposes a solution.
1. When Hamor discusses the matter with Dinah’s family, there is no hint of an **apology** or that a wrong has been committed. One gets the idea that this sort of boy-girl behavior goes on all the time in their city. Sex **before marriage** is the norm.
 2. Hamor not only works to arrange a marriage between his son and Dinah, he proposes that their tribes begin to practice **intermarriage**. The financial advantages would be great. Hamor’s proposal amounts to **assimilation**.
- D. Genesis 34:13–24. The sons of Jacob **deceive** the Shechemites.
1. The brothers, knowing that Dinah is still held in Shechem’s home and that an armed attack against the city would be suicidal, resort to deception.⁹ In making circumcision the condition for marriage, they are not asking the Shechemites to convert to another religion. In separating the rite from its religious significance, the brothers are guilty of **blasphemy**; profaning that which is holy.
 2. In convincing their fellow citizens to be circumcised, Shechem and Hamor make no mention of the real reason behind this decision (rape!). They only mention the economic advantages. Thus, the deceived are **deceiving** others.
- E. Genesis 34:25–31. Simeon and Levi **avenge** their sister.
1. Not only did Simeon and Levi brutally **murder** all the men, they also callously **plundered** the city; taking wives, children, and possessions (Gn 34:29). Even if their zeal for justice was commendable, their actions were clearly barbaric and cruel.¹⁰
 2. Jacob’s rebuke makes no mention of their violent behavior, only that their actions have exposed the family to danger. The brothers’ only defense is, “Should he treat our sister like a **whore**?” (Gn 34:31). Jacob’s silence is token acceptance of their point.

III. Lessons Learned

This story is about some **really messed up** people:

- A teenage girl, Dinah, who is naïve and flirtatious.
- A teenage boy, Shechem, who is controlled by his lusts.
- A father, Jacob, who is emotionally absent and passive.
- Another father, Hamor, who is permissive and lenient.
- A set of brothers who are vengeful and violent.
- A city that tried to deceive others and then was itself deceived.
- A God in heaven who **permits** these things to happen and who (apparently) expects us to figure out how to respond! The following conclusions will hopefully point the way to moral clarity in a morally ambiguous world.

⁹ Like father, like sons! Just as their father was a master of deceit, duplicity, and manipulation, so are his children (see Gn 25:26; 27:24, 35–36).

¹⁰ Simeon and Levi will later be cursed by their father for their vengeful violence and cruelty (Gn 49:5–7).

- A. Do not **love the world** or desire to imitate her perverse ways.

The trouble began when Dinah was attracted by her pagan neighbors and naively mingled with them. While we are to love our neighbors, we must be “wise as serpents” concerning the **seductive** power of their worldly ways. “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?” (Jas 4:4; see 1 Jn 2:15–17). Especially when it comes to human sexuality, we should especially be alert to the danger of **assimilation!** Leviticus 18 (God’s list of sexual prohibitions) begins with these words:

You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the Lord your God . . . (Leviticus 18:3–4)

Lesson #1. We must be vigilant not only to the physical dangers of the world (rape, etc.) but also to being contaminated by worldly ways of **thinking**, especially in reference to human sexuality. God’s people have always been **distinguished** from the world by the way we practice our sexuality.

- B. Get things in their **proper order!**

When it comes to love, sex, and marriage, God clearly stated his intended sequence of events at the dawn of creation: “A man shall **leave** his father and his mother and shall **cleave** unto his wife; and they shall be **one flesh**” (Gn 2:24 KJV).¹¹

1. *Leave*: become mature and responsible.
2. *Cleave*: hold fast to the woman you love and get married.
3. *Become one flesh*: sexual union.

Shechem **reversed** this order! *First*, he had sex. *Then*, “his soul clave unto Dinah” (Gn 34:3 KJV). *Finally*, he asked his daddy to arrange a marriage.

When the local prince, Shechem . . . saw Dinah, he seized her and raped her. But then he fell in love with her and tried to win her affection with tender words. He said to his father, Hamor, “Get me this young girl. I want to marry her.” (Genesis 32:2–4 NLT)

Lesson #2. When sex outside of marriage becomes **normal**, then be prepared for moral chaos and violent depravity to come in like a flood.

- C. Think deeply about **how I respond** when I learn that a woman has been abused, assaulted, and treated as an object. This text illustrates three very bad responses:
1. *Jacob*—**passivity**, emotional detachment, denial. Do nothing, say nothing.
 2. *Hamor*—it’s no big deal; this is **normal** behavior. Let’s have a wedding and move on.
 3. *Simeon and Levi*—revenge, **violence**, vigilante justice.

Put yourself in Jacob’s shoes and imagine what would have been the right response when he learned that his daughter had been raped:

- _____.
- _____.

¹¹ Note how this sequence is followed in the courtship and marriage stories of Rebekah/Isaac and Rachel/Jacob. These women *consent* to marriage and sex comes *after* the marriage covenant is made.

- _____.
- _____.
- _____.

Lesson #3. Imagining the right response to sexual harassment and assault helps to **prepare us** for life in the real world.

D. Sexual relations are never just between **two people**.

Don't believe the lie that pretends that what two people do in a bedroom is nobody else's business! What happened between Shechem and Dinah became an **international incident**. Dinah's brothers rightly discerned that what had happened affected the entire nation.

Lesson #4. Though human sexuality and sexual expression are personal, intimate, and private, how we think about and practice these matters have **huge implications** for the entire community. Thus, these matters need to be discussed, the Scriptures need to be examined, and God needs to be invited into the discussion.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do you feel about the #MeToo movement? Has it been a good thing for our culture?
2. Describe what Dinah may have been thinking as she sought friendships with pagan girls. If you had been her mom or dad, how might you have counseled her?
3. Why does the Bible prohibit sexual relations outside of marriage? What's wrong with premarital sex?
4. When he learned that his daughter was raped, Jacob was passive and emotionally detached. What happens when a leader fails to provide direction when an injustice occurs?



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

THE PURPOSE OF PITS

Genesis 37:1–36

I. Introduction to the Life of Joseph

- A. The story of Joseph takes 14 chapters of Genesis; almost **one third** of the book. Though not a patriarch, his life is of supreme importance in the biblical narrative in:
1. **History**: how the Hebrews got to Egypt, the origin of the tribes Ephraim and Manasseh, how God’s people can be a blessing to “all the families of the earth” (see Gn 12:1–3),¹ etc.
 2. Understanding **interpersonal relationships**: sibling rivalry, bullying, group think², human trafficking, temptation, the use of power, politics, reconciliation, etc.
 3. **Theology**: providence, suffering, worldliness, good and evil, forgiveness, witness, etc.
- B. Amazingly, other than being a “spoiled brat” as a youth (see Gn 37), we know of **no** instances in his life when Joseph experienced a moral failure; no character flaws. He was truly a **godly** man.
- C. Joseph’s life (Gn 37–50) can be outlined as a series of **reversals**:
1. From being the eleventh born son to being **daddy’s favorite**.
 2. From being daddy’s favorite to being thrown in **the pit** (Gn 37).
 3. From the pit to being **master** in Potiphar’s house (Gn 39:1–6).
 4. From being master in Potiphar’s house to **the prison** (Gn 39:7–23).
 5. From the prison to being **prime minister** of Egypt (Gn 40–41).
- D. The key verse for understanding Joseph comes at the end of his life³: “You meant **evil** against me, but God meant it for **good**” (Gn 50:20).⁴ Referring to this verse, David Seamands said the greatness of Joseph was that he had **50/20 vision**.
- E. Another way to see the significance of Joseph’s story is to tell the story this way:
- Once upon a time a father said to his beloved son: “I’m concerned about my children. I think they’re lost. I want to send you to go and find them and bring them home.”
- “OK, father; I’ll go,” said the son. When the beloved son found his brothers, they did not welcome him. In fact, they hated him and were jealous of him. They conspired

¹ It is interesting to compare Joseph’s life to Daniel’s. Both men interpreted dreams, served pagan rulers, held powerful positions in the government, and were unjustly thrown into prison.

² The ten brothers act in unison in the crime of human trafficking and the conspiracy to cover it up. Though Reuben and Judah make feeble protests, they are all complicit. “Group think” is the phenomenon that occurs when a group reaches consensus without critical reasoning or evaluation of the consequences or alternatives. It is based in peer pressure and the desire not to upset the balance of the group. It describes, for example, how the entire German nation became complicit in anti-Semitism in the 1930s and 40s.

³ Often it seems that life makes sense only when looking in the rearview mirror. Soren Kierkegaard famously said: “Life must be lived forward but understood backward.”

⁴ Genesis 50:20 is to the Old Testament what Romans 8:28 is to the New Testament. “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”

together, stripped him, beat him, and sold him for 30 pieces of silver. They thought they had killed him but later discovered that he had somehow risen in power and glory. He was seated on a throne, ruling over the whole land.

When a famine became so severe that it seemed the brothers would die, this beloved son, rather than seeking revenge, provided food for them and invited them to live in a lovely home where they would be safe from the ravaging pestilence. The most amazing part of the story is that he fully and freely forgave his brothers for the evil they had committed against him and reconciled with them so they could once again be a happy, united family.

For the father so loved the world, that he gave his most beloved son, that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have eternal life.

II. Examine the text

A. Genesis 37:1–11. Home, Sweet **Dysfunctional** Home.

Far from keeping secret the skeletons in the family closet, the Bible **highlights** them. Apparently, God wants us to know that even the best families struggle to make relationships work. Two areas of dysfunction are emphasized:

1. Parental **favoritism** (Gn 37:3).
 - a. Of all people, Jacob especially should have been alert to this and the long-term **damage** it can cause in a family! (See Gn 25:27–28)
 - b. Rather than dealing **privately** with his bias, Jacob was flagrant and public in his favoritism. The lavishly colored tunic⁵ was probably an indication that Joseph was the heir apparent.⁶ Joseph's brothers were **jealous** (Gn 37:11).
 - c. Though we make jokes about it, parental favoritism is not funny. The **scars** are often deep and long-lasting. Whether expressed by parents, teachers, bosses, pastors, or government leaders, the Bible strongly **condemns** showing favoritism (partiality, prejudice, bias). God shows no partiality (Rom 2:11), and we mustn't either (Lv 19:15; 1 Tm 5:21; Jas 2:9).
2. Sibling **rivalry**.
 - a. Just as we underestimate the damage caused by parental favoritism, so with sibling rivalry. Yet conflict between siblings is a **major theme** in Genesis. Cain vs Abel, Isaac vs Ishmael, Jacob vs Esau, Rachel vs Leah, and Joseph vs his brothers; this seems to be what the book is all about!

⁵ "A richly ornamented robe" (NIV), "a long robe with sleeves" (RSV), "a robe of many colors" (ESB), "a varicolored tunic" (NASB).

⁶ The firstborn, Reuben, had forfeited the birthright because of his incestuous relationship with his stepmother (see Gn 35:22; 1 Chron. 5:1). Simeon and Levi were not viable candidates because of their hot-headed violence (see Gn 34:25–31; 49:5–7). Joseph was the firstborn son of Jacob's favorite wife (Rachel) and was already (at age 17) showing strong leadership abilities. In Jacob's eyes, Joseph was the obvious choice to be his primary heir.

- b. Our text offers three reasons why the brothers hated⁷ Joseph. In their opinion, he was:
- A **tattletale**. Though we can only guess what prompted the “bad report” that Joseph brought his father⁸ (Gn 37:2), we have no doubt how his brothers felt about it.
 - A **spoiled brat**. The favoritism that Jacob showed Joseph infuriated the brothers (Gn 37:3–4). They failed to see that their real problem was with their dad, not their brother!
 - A **braggart**. His grandiose dreams were evidence of megalomania for sure (Gn 37:5–12). They never paused to consider if the dreams could be from God.

B. Genesis 37:12–36.

1. Verses 12–28. Joseph finally finds his brothers near Dothan, where they **conspire** to kill him. Reuben convinces them to throw him in a **pit**. Judah suggests that he be sold as a slave to a caravan headed to Egypt.

Note: Joseph is a **minor** (age 17). He is subjected to both physical and psychological **abuse**. His protests and cries for help are of no avail (Gn 42:21). His brothers are guilty of serious crimes: attempted murder, kidnapping, child trafficking, slave trading, conspiracy, and obstruction of justice. Though Joseph may have been a spoiled brat, he did not deserve this! He is truly a **victim**.

2. Verses 29–35. The brothers dip Joseph’s cloak in the blood of a slaughtered goat and take it to their father who concludes that “a fierce animal has devoured him” (v. 33). Jacob is **inconsolable** in his grief.⁹
3. Verse 36. Meanwhile, Joseph is sold as a slave to Potiphar’s house in **Egypt**.

III. The Purpose of Pits¹⁰

Pits pose a problem for people who ponder. Are pits punishment for poor performance? Is this painful place perhaps the product of a pathological past? Will pits persist perpetually? Are people predestined to be put in pits? Pits are profoundly puzzling. Do pits possess a purpose?

Pits are part of providence. This is the primary point I am passionate to promote. Pits are places pregnant with a plethora of possibilities. Pits have power to puncture pride, prove the power of prayer, prompt praise, practice patience, promote peace, protect purity, and prove providence. Precisely! Pity the person who can’t perceive the positive potential in pits.¹¹

- A. The Bible has a lot to say about “pits”¹² and numerous characters found themselves in one—literally. Though the reasons they landed in the pits varied greatly, God

⁷ The word “hate” is used three times in this text: Gn 37:4, 5, and 8.

⁸ Was he a legitimate “whistle blower”? Or perhaps an opportunist looking to score points with Dad?

⁹ When his daughter Dinah was raped, Jacob had no emotional reaction at all (Gn 34:5). Yet when he believes his favorite son has been killed, he sobs hysterically and will not be comforted. This is yet another evidence of parental partiality that must have been very hurtful among the siblings.

¹⁰ Note that the word “pit” is used seven times in five different verses in this passage (Gn 37:20, 22, 24, 28, 29).

¹¹ For the complete version of “The Purpose of Pits” see *Face to Face* (Francis Asbury Press, 2015, 712–13).

¹² Our English word “pit” translates several different Hebrew terms that refer to things like a hole, a cistern, a well, a dungeon, an animal trap, Sheol, a grave, and even a prostitute. Little wonder that the word can also be used metaphorically to describe a situation that is very difficult and painful: the pits.

delivered them all: Joseph (Gn 37:24), Jeremiah (Jer 38:6), David (1 Sm 22:1–2; 24:1–3; Ps 57, 142), Elijah (1 Kgs 19:9–10), Jonah (Jon 2:2–6), and Paul and Silas (Acts 16:23–24).

B. In Psalm 40:1–3, we can discern a six-step recovery program¹³ for people in pits:

I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

² He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

1. **Confess** the truth. Admit reality. “Hi, I’m Stan and I’m in a pit.”

No one ever gets out of a pit by pretending they aren’t in one! Denial is no solution. This step sounds simple, but it may be harder than you think (see Rv 3:17).

2. Acknowledge your **inability**. “I can’t get out.”

Joseph must have tried to get out of his pit by jumping, climbing the walls, making a rope, etc. But if the pit is muddy, the harder you try, the deeper you sink. We cannot save ourselves.

3. Cry out to God in **prayer**. “Help!”

God heard David’s cry. Use the PUSH method of praying: Pray Until Something Happens. Let Bartimaeus be your model (Mk 10:46–52).

4. **Wait**.

Trust God, even when it seems nothing is happening. In the Bible, to “wait on the Lord” is evidence of faith, hope, and confident expectation (Ps 27:14; Is 40:31; etc.). “The only way to know strong faith is to endure great trials” (George Muller).

5. **Love** your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Beware lest your pit become an occasion for bitterness to fester and grow. If you hate your enemy, he wins twice! Forgiveness is not saying that what my enemy did was okay. It is rather taking him off *my* hook so God can put him on *his*! “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Rom 12:19).

6. When God delivers you—**tell the world!**

“Many will see and put their trust in the Lord” (Ps 40:3). Joseph’s story (from pit to palace) has been told for 3,500 years and been a blessing to millions. Make *your* “pit story” an integral part of your life message.

¹³ I am indebted to those who created the 12-step recovery program (used most famously in work with alcoholics) for the idea of my simple six steps. Some may think my six steps are half as effective. I like to think they are twice as fast!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever thought of Joseph as a picture of Jesus (hated by his brothers, thrown in a pit, raised to power, etc.)? What lessons should we draw from this?
2. Why do you think the Bible highlights the dysfunctions and sins of Jacob's family? Are you encouraged or discouraged by the fact that families in the Bible have so many problems?
3. Thinking back on your own family of birth, was there any parental favoritism? Sibling rivalry? What impact did it have on you?
4. What do you think Joseph must have felt when he was thrown into the pit? Do you think it was easy for him to "wait on the Lord"?
5. Describe a "pit experience" in your life. What did you learn?

He Brought Me Out

By Henry J. Zelle (1898)

1. *My heart was distressed 'neath Jehovah's dread frown,
And low in the pit where my sins dragged me down;
I cried to the Lord from the deep miry clay,
Who tenderly brought me out to golden day.*

Refrain:

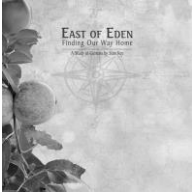
*He brought me out of the miry clay,
He set my feet on the Rock to stay;
He puts a song in my soul today,
A song of praise, hallelujah!*

2. *He placed me upon the strong Rock by His side,
My steps were established and here I'll abide;
No danger of falling while here I remain,
But stand by His grace until the crown I gain.*

3. *He gave me a song, 'twas a new song of praise;
By day and by night its sweet notes I will raise;
My heart's overflowing, I'm happy and free;
I'll praise my Redeemer, Who has rescued me.*

4. *I'll sing of His wonderful mercy to me,
I'll praise Him till all men His goodness shall see;
I'll sing of salvation at home and abroad,
Till many shall hear the truth and trust in God.*

5. *I'll tell of the pit, with its gloom and despair,
I'll praise the dear Father, who answered my prayer;
I'll sing my new song, the glad story of love,
Then join in the chorus with the saints above.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home
A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

HERE'S TO YOU, MRS. POTIPHAR

Genesis 39

I. Mrs. Robinson Revisited

- A. Baby Boomers will remember Simon and Garfunkel's Grammy Award-winning song "Mrs. Robinson." Written for the movie *The Graduate* (1967), the lyrics allude to the sordid story of a middle-aged woman, Mrs. Robinson (played by Ann Bancroft), who seduces a 21-year-old college graduate named Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman). The song and the movie are classic examples of the self-absorbed **hedonism** that so often characterized that "Me" generation.

*And here's to you, Mrs. Robinson,
Jesus loves you more than you will know; wo, wo, wo.
God bless you please, Mrs. Robinson,
Heaven holds a place for those who pray; hey, hey, hey.*

- B. Genesis 39 introduces us to the "Mrs. Robinson" of the Old Testament. We don't know her first name, only that she is **married** to a prominent Egyptian official named Potiphar. Like Mrs. Robinson in the movie, Mrs. Potiphar in the Bible is famous for only one thing: **seduction**. Perhaps her story could be told in the words of the song printed at the end of this study.
- C. Although Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Potiphar have much in common, Benjamin Braddock and Joseph are complete **opposites!** Benjamin gets entangled in the web of the wicked spider while Joseph escapes. This is his second "pit" experience (see Gn 37) which perhaps is more treacherous than the first!
- "The mouth of forbidden women is a deep pit" (Prv 22:14).
 - "For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well" (Prv 23:27).
- D. This passage is not just about sexual temptation. The bigger and more important issue is whether Joseph can maintain his **identity** as a child of God in Egypt, where he confronts the seductive charms and siren calls of **worldliness**. "Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore." The Land of Promise (Canaan) and the faith of his father seem far away. The allure of Egyptian thinking and living is before him. Joseph is not just being seduced *in* Egypt; he is being seduced *by* Egypt! Will he cease to be a Jew? Will he become an **Egyptian**? Mrs. Potiphar may be the first seductive encounter Joseph (and later, the Jewish nation) has with Egyptian ways, but it will not be the last!

II. Survey of Genesis 39

- A. Joseph **prospers and thrives** because God is with him (Gn 39:1–6).
1. Potiphar is an "officer" of Pharaoh (Gn 39:1). This term may mean that he was a **eunuch**. This may explain (but not justify) some of Mrs. Potiphar's behavior.¹
 2. Four times we are told that "the LORD was with Joseph" (Gn 39:2, 3, 21, 23). The word used here is **Yahweh**, the personal name of God. The One

¹ Eunuchs were those who were castrated so that they would be more devoted to the king's service and would not consort with the king's harem.

accompanying Joseph in Egypt is not a vague, generic deity but a personal God with whom one can have a relationship, the God of Abraham.

3. Potiphar knew that the **blessing of God** was on his house because of Joseph. This illustrates what God had promised Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you... in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gn 12:1-3).
- B. Joseph **resists seduction** because God is with him (Gn 39:7-18).
1. Mrs. Potiphar's strategy of seduction is *not* subtle: "Lie with me!" (Gn 39:7, 12). In Genesis 34:2-3, Shechem sexually assaults Dinah (male to female). Here a female assaults a male. The Bible teaches that **sexual harassment** can work both ways.
 2. Joseph gives two reasons for resisting Mrs. Potiphar (Gn 39:8-9). This would be a sin against:
 - My boss, your husband; a **betrayal of trust**.
 - **God** (see Ps 51:4). Joseph lived centuries before the Ten Commandments were given, but he knew adultery was wrong and that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place" (Prv15:3).
 3. Hell has no fury like a woman scorned! Mrs. Potiphar first calls the servants and then her husband, making a **false accusation** that Joseph had tried to rape her. She has his clothing to prove it! The perpetrator pretends to be the victim. Note how she:
 - Blames it on her **husband**: this servant "whom *you* have brought among us" tried to rape me (Gn 39:17; see Gn 39:14).
 - Plays the **race card**. Twice, she calls Joseph a "Hebrew" (Gn 39:14, 17).
- C. Joseph is **cast into prison**—and God is still with him (Gn 39:19-23).
1. Potiphar is "angry." But at whom? And if Joseph is indeed a rapist, why didn't he have him killed? Note that Potiphar put Joseph in the prison where he was the warden; a prison for political prisoners, not criminals (see Gn 37:36 and 40:3). Could it be that Potiphar knows both his wife and Joseph so well that he is **suspicious** of his wife's account of what happened?
 2. Joseph does not **defend himself**. Perhaps he knows it would be futile. Perhaps he is trusting God and knows that the truth will speak for itself (Is 53:7; 1 Pt 2:18-23).
 3. But in prison, the Lord showed Joseph **steadfast love** (*hesed*) (Gn 39:21).

III. The Fire Within

- A. Mrs. Potiphar reminds us of the women on the TV show *Desperate Housewives*. Reading between the lines, she probably is:
1. **Beautiful**—Egyptian women were known for their beauty (Nefertiti, Cleopatra, etc.). Perhaps she is a "trophy wife," an accessory that General Potiphar can show off at social events.
 2. **Wealthy**—Pampered; married to a powerful man.
 3. **Bored**—With servants to do the work and no pressure to be gainfully employed, it seems she has time on her hands.
 4. **Confident**—Perhaps she had lured Potiphar into marrying her. Perhaps she has seduced others. She knows the drill: bath robe, tanning by the pool,

perfume, eye contact, a passing touch, soft words... and then, "Lie with me."
But for some reason, her strategy doesn't work with this Hebrew slave!

5. **Trapped** in a loveless marriage—Her husband is married to his work and is often away from home. If Potiphar is a eunuch, it only heightens her need for love and emotional connection.
- B. Other factors are also at work, making Joseph's ability to resist temptation even more difficult:
1. Joseph is "**handsome** in form and appearance"² (Gn 39:6). He is good-looking and well-built. He is also single, in his early twenties.
 2. Mrs. Potiphar is Joseph's **social superior**. What do you do when your boss makes a pass at you? Refusing her advances could ruin his career.
 3. Joseph's work requires him often to be **alone** in the house with Mrs. Potiphar (Gn 39:11).
 4. Mrs. Potiphar's seductive flirtation is **constant**, "day after day" (Gn 39:10).
 5. Joseph could easily **justify** giving in to her advances: "Hey, she's my boss and she's the initiator. I deserve a little fun. This may advance my career. No one will ever know. There's no law against this. And besides, my whole family has a long history of sexual misconduct."³
- C. The message of this passage: Be **prepared**.

When the moment of seduction came, Joseph was ready. A soldier who waits until the first shots are fired to check his equipment (Is my rifle working well? Do I have enough ammunition? Etc.) will likely be killed in the battle. So will a man or woman who is unprepared for the siren voices of sexual temptation. The Bible includes stories like this⁴ precisely because God **wants us to talk** about these things and thus to prepare ourselves for when temptation comes. Here are five things you can do to prepare for sexual temptation:

1. Cultivate and maintain a vital **relationship** with Jesus Christ.
"The Lord was with Joseph" (Gn 39:2, 3, 21, 24). If Joseph had waited to develop his relationship with the Lord until Mrs. Potiphar walked into the room in her bath robe, it would have been **too late**. Joseph had victory over temptation because he had a solid, daily, personal walk with the Lord. "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal 5:16).

*I need Thee every hour, stay Thou nearby;
Temptations lose their power, when Thou art nigh.⁵*

2. **Run.**

When Mrs. Potiphar propositioned Joseph, he "fled and got out of the house" (Gn 39:12). Joseph did not pause to think about it, to discuss the matter, or to

² He got his good looks from his mother Rachel. The same words are used to describe her beauty (Gn 29:17).

³ His great-grandfather Abraham slept with one of his slaves and twice put his wife in a pagan king's harem. His grandfather Isaac put his wife in a pagan king's harem. His distant cousin Lot committed incest with his daughters. His brother Ruben committed incest with his stepmother and his brother Judah committed incest with his daughter-in-law. And numerous family members had multiple wives and concubines.

⁴ Besides the story of Joseph and Mrs. Potiphar (Gn 39), we should remember Samson and Delilah (Jgs 16), David and Bathsheba (2 Sm 11-12), and Solomon and his 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kgs 11:1-8).

⁵ Annie S. Hawks (1835-1918).

witness to her. With many temptations, the Bible exhorts us to **stand and fight**. With sexual temptation, we are urged to **turn and flee**! Every second counts. In mentoring young Timothy, Paul exhorts him to “flee youthful passions” (2 Tm 2:22; cf. 1 Cor 6:18).

3. Make a covenant with your **eyes**.

The Bible emphasizes how temptation often makes its first beachhead in our hearts by getting our eyes focused on some **forbidden fruit** (Gn 3:6; Jgs 14:1; 16:1, 2 Sm 11:2). For men, the battle is usually won or lost with the eyes. This explains why Job said, “I have made a covenant with my eyes, not to look lustfully at a girl” (Job 31:1).

In a culture like ours where we are constantly bombarded with visual sexual stimuli (magazines, billboards, TV ads, internet, etc.), we may not be able to control the first look; but we can control the second. Steve Arterburn in his important book *Every Man's Battle*, urges men to learn how to “**bounce** their eyes.” Martin Luther said, “I cannot stop the birds from flying over my head. But I can stop them from building a nest in my hair.”

*O be careful little eyes, what you see (2X);
For the Father up above
Is looking down in love.
O be careful little eyes what you see.*

4. Be **accountable**.

If you are married, listen to your wife. She has antennae that men don't seem to have. The fear of **Katy** is the beginning of wisdom. Share your struggles in a small group of trusted brothers. “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (Jas 5:16).

Sin thrives when we live in isolation.

5. Fight fire with **fire**.

The best way to control the raging passion of lust is to find another passion that burns even **hotter**. There is only one: the fire of Pentecost—the Holy Spirit. This is what Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) called “the **expulsive power** of a new affection.” Victory over sexual temptation does not come through discipline and hard work alone. Real victory comes only when we experience a passion that burns hotter than carnal lust.

Greek mythology tells of two different methods used by sailors to get safely past the Island of the **Sirens**. Beautiful women sought to lure passing ships by their seductive beauty and enticing voices. But when the sailors went closer for a better look, they would **shipwreck** on the rocky coast.

- *Ulysses* had his men put wax in their ears and then lash him to the mast. When passing the island, he pled with his men to untie him and let him go to the island. They were able to pass, but only by **physical restraint**. Though their actions were outwardly moral, their hearts remained polluted, filled with carnal lust.
- *Jason* (and the Argonauts) found a much better method. Passing the island, he commanded Orpheus to play his **magic harp**. The sound of his music was sweeter and more enticing than that of the siren voices. Their seductive charms lost all their power as the melodious music of heaven overpowered the fleshly chorus of earth.

D. Conclusion.

The gospel offers victory over sexual temptation not by forceful willpower and coercion, but by transforming our loves and our desires. It promises more than behavior modification. It promises a pure heart. Christ does not wish to **annihilate** our passions; he wants to **sanctify** them! The fire of the Spirit enabling us to love God with all our being is stronger than the fire of fleshly lust.

This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.... For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why do we tend to enjoy films like *The Graduate* and songs like *Mrs. Robinson* and chapters of the Bible like Genesis 39?
2. "Joseph is not just being seduced *in* Egypt; he is being seduced *by* Egypt!" Discuss this statement.
3. With most temptations, the Bible tells us to stand and fight, but with sexual temptation we are urged to turn and run. Talk about this.
4. What is the meaning of the phrase, "the expulsive power of a new affection"? How does it relate to sexual temptation?
5. When it comes to victory of sexual temptation, do most people today follow the Ulysses model or the Jason model?

Mrs. Potiphar

Stan Key

*And here's to you, Mrs. Potiphar,
Jesus loves you more than you will know.*

Wo, wo, wo.

*Turn from your sin, Mrs. Potiphar
There's still time to change your ways and pray.*

Hey, hey, hey. Hey, hey, hey.

*We'd like for you to know what God thinks of someone like you;
We'd like to help you change your ways.
For women who seduce and capture young men in their arms;
Will with their victims burn in hell.*

*Koo-koo-ka-choo, Mrs. Potiphar,
Beneath your plastic face and painted eyes;*

Wo, wo, wo.

*We see the slut that you really are,
Lusting like a spider for some prey;*

Hey, hey, hey. Hey, hey, hey.

*What's that you say, Mrs. Potiphar;
Your marriage stinks, your husband's far away?*

Wo, wo, wo.

*And so you think, Mrs. Potiphar,
You have the right to make your bed and play;*

Hey, hey, hey. Hey, hey, hey.

*Sitting here in church on Sunday morning in these pews,
Listening to the preacher, preach the Word;
Will I laugh or will I cry? Oh, how will I respond?
Every way I look, I have to choose!*

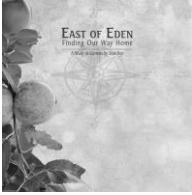
*Where have you gone, Joseph, Jacob's son?
Our nation wonders if there is a man;*

Wo, wo, wo.

*Who can withstand Mrs. Potiphar,
Resist her charms and turn and run away;*

Hey, hey, hey. Hey, hey, hey.

*Jesus Christ can cleanse a heart and make it strong and pure,
He can take a man and make him new!
So if Mrs. Potiphar is knocking at your door,
Let Jesus go and answer it for you!*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

FAITH@WORK

Genesis 40–41

I. From the Pit to the Palace

A. Joseph interprets the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker (Gn 40:1–23).

The Lord blesses Joseph in **prison**. He is “put in charge” of all the prisoners (Gn 39:22). The cupbearer and baker have troubling dreams. Joseph interprets their dreams. Both interpretations prove true. Notice:

1. Joseph **notices** that their faces are sad, and he **cares** enough to ask them why (Gn 40:6–7).
2. Joseph **bears witness** to his faith in God and humbly explains that interpretation of dreams belongs to God, not man (Gn 40:8).
3. Joseph asks the cupbearer to plead his case after he is released; but the cupbearer forgets (Gn 40:14–15, 23). It’s yet another act of **injustice**.

B. Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh (Gn 41:1–36).

Two years later, Pharaoh has two dreams (or one dream in two parts). The cupbearer remembers Joseph, who is promptly called. Joseph not only interprets the dream (seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine), he gives **advice**: Find a wise administrator and prepare! Notice:

1. Pharaoh’s dream is obviously ominous (thin cows eating plump cows, etc.) but none of the **magicians or wise men** can interpret the meaning (Gn 41:8).
2. Notice how the prison is called a **“pit”** (Gn 40:15; 41:14; see 37:20, 22, 24, 28, 29).
3. Joseph changes clothes and **shaves** (Gn 41:14). The Egyptians were the only people of the ancient Near East to shave. Joseph is not just dressing up for a visit to the Oval Office; he is taking up **Egyptian** ways. Is he hiding his Hebrew identity?
4. “It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer” (Gn 41:16). Notice how **humility** is not incompatible with prophetic **authority**: “I don’t have the ability, but *God does!*” Don’t mistake humility for weakness!

C. Joseph is elevated to Prime Minister (Gn 41:37–57).

On the spot, Pharaoh makes Joseph ruler over all the land of Egypt and gives him his signet ring¹, new clothing, a gold chain, a chariot, a **new name**, and an Egyptian **wife**. Joseph implements government policies that centralize power and consolidate Pharaoh’s reign (see Gn 47:13–26). Notice:

1. Pharaoh recognizes that “the **Spirit of God**” is in Joseph because of his discernment and wisdom (Gn 41:38; cf. Dan. 5:14).
2. Though Pharaoh gives Joseph an Egyptian name, it is **never** used in the biblical text; not even by Pharaoh.

¹ The signet ring gave Joseph the ability to sign official documents on behalf of Pharaoh, to affix Pharaoh’s seal.

3. Joseph has two sons, both given **Hebrew** names: Manasseh (God has made me forget my hardship²) and Ephraim (God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction) (Gn 41:50–52).

II. Business as Mission

In studying this passage, most commentaries focus on the meaning of dreams, the rewards of faithful living, unjust suffering, etc. Our study will focus on the theme of work—faith in the **workplace**.

A. Joe the Plumber³

The Bible presents Joseph as one of the godliest and most **influential** witnesses in history—and yet he never preached a sermon, led a worship service, or went to seminary. He was not a patriarch, prophet, apostle, missionary, scribe, or priest. We know of four different jobs that he held:

1. He took care of his brother's sheep: **shepherd** (Gn 37:2).⁴
2. He was “overseer” of Potiphar's house (Gn 39:4–6): **manager/steward**.
3. He was “in charge of all the prisoners... whatever was done there, he was the one who did it” (Gn 39:22–23): **General Manager/Executive Director/CEO**.
4. He was over all Egypt, second only to Pharaoh (Gn 41:40–44): **Prime Minister/Grand Vizier**.

B. Witness in the workplace.

Wherever Joseph worked, there was a recognizable *something* that made people aware that **the Lord** was with him, his work was **exceptional** and a great **blessing** to others. Often this brought a positive response but sometimes a negative one.

*²The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a **successful** man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. ⁴So Joseph found **favor** in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ⁵From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord **blessed** the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. ⁶So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate. (Genesis 39:2–6)*

God's presence in Joseph's life also gave him a **moral compass** that caused him to refuse certain activities: “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Gn 39:9). This offended the wife of his boss, and he was thrown in prison. Note how the presence of God can sometimes bring favor and sometimes **persecution**.

² By naming his son “Forget,” Joseph will always have a reminder of what he doesn't want to remember! He cannot escape his past or forget his true identity!

³ Joe Wurzelbacher gained notoriety during the presidential campaign of 2008 when he asked then Senator Barack Obama about his small business tax policy because he wanted to open a plumbing business. John McCain, running against Obama, got mileage from the dialogue and gave him the moniker “Joe the Plumber” which became a metaphor for hard-working middle-class Americans.

⁴ Numerous men who became great leaders in the Kingdom of God got their start as shepherds: Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Amos, etc. Apparently, God considers shepherding to be a superb foundation for leadership training.

*²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him **favor** in the sight of the keeper of the prison. ²² And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. ²³ The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the LORD was with him. And whatever he did, the LORD made it **succeed**. (Genesis 39:21–23)*

Pharaoh recognizes that Joseph's wisdom is caused by the **Spirit of God** that is in him (Gn 41:38–39). God blesses the nation of **Egypt** because of Joseph, who saves them from starvation (see Gn 41:53–57; 47:13–26). Though his policies take away civil liberties, create Big Government, and make the people Pharaoh's slaves, the Egyptians bless Joseph saying, "You have saved our lives" (Gn 47:25).

C. Joseph's Work Ethic⁵

We might summarize Joseph's witness at work this way:

1. The 13 years⁶ Joseph spent at **Pit** State University were the best possible education he could have received in **leadership training**. Here he learned humility, how to trust in the Lord, how to forgive his enemies, how to be content, etc. Leaders who haven't been trained at Pit State are dangerous!⁷ "God rarely uses a man greatly, until he hurts a man deeply" (A. W. Tozer).
2. He is **open and verbal** about his faith. He is not private about what he believes nor silent though he seems to show respect for others and tact. Everyone knows he worships *Yahweh*, the One true God, not one of the deities of Egypt (Gn 39: 2, 3, 21, 23).
3. He has moral **integrity**.⁸ He is not swayed by bribes or temptations (Gn 39:7–12). Potiphar, the warden, and Pharaoh trust him completely (Gn 39: 6, 23); no need for contracts or supervision. He tells the truth (expense reports, time sheet, etc.). "Let what you say be simple 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil" (Mt 5:37).
4. He has **compassion** for others. He cares about the people he works with and notices when they are sad (Gn 40:6–7). His coworkers are persons, not just a means to an end.
5. He is **humble** and gives glory to God for his wisdom (Gn 40:8; 41:16). He doesn't take credit for what God has made possible. As a youth, Joseph seemed rather cocky and arrogant strutting about in his colorful coat and telling about his dreams of grandeur. But his years at Pit State University humbled him. It's not about me!

⁵ Though Joseph is one of the best examples of "faith at work" in the Bible, he is not the only one. Consider also Bezalel (Ex 31:1–6; 35:30–35), Daniel (the book of Daniel), Paul (Acts 18:3; 20:34–35; 1 Thes 2:9–10; 2 Thes 3:7–9), and Dorcas (Acts 9:36–43). And don't forget that Jesus was a carpenter for 18 years (Mk 6:3) and a preacher for only three!

⁶ Joseph was 17 years of age when he was sold into slavery and 30 when he was elevated to Prime Minister (Gn 37:2–41:46). Thus, we can calculate the length of his time in "the pit" as 13 years.

⁷ Others who had lengthy "pit" experiences before they were entrusted with leadership were Moses (40 years in the desert), David (10 years running from Saul), Paul (3 years in Arabia), and Jesus (40 days in the desert).

⁸ The word "integrity" relates to honesty, soundness, adhering to moral principles. The word referred originally to a condition of being complete, undivided, whole. It describes consistency of character. The concept of being whole-hearted is an Old Testament way of speaking about entire sanctification.

And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. (Deuteronomy 8:2)

6. He is competent and does his work with **excellence**. Joseph's work was always of high quality. He worked to please his Master in heaven, not just his master on earth. Piety should never be an excuse for poor performance. The point in life is not so much to do great things as it is to do **ordinary** things in a great way!

⁵Slaves [servants], obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. (Ephesians 6:5–8)

7. He is faithful in the **small things**; even when no one is watching. Whether taking care of his brothers' sheep, Potiphar's estate, or the prison, Joseph does his work with diligence. God has a promise for people who work like this: "You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things" (Mt 25:21).

8. Rather than living for a promotion or grumbling about his situation, Joseph is **content** wherever he finds himself and gives himself fully to the present task. He learns a revolutionary secret: contentment has little to do with **circumstances** and everything to do with heart attitude. He does not suffer from destination disease (I can't thrive *here*; but I'll thrive when I get **there!**). From a Roman prison, Paul writes:

*I have **learned** in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11–13)*

9. When he is the victim of injustice (his brothers, Mrs. Potiphar, the cupbearer), he does not allow his heart to grow **bitter**. He forgives his enemies and learns not to carry a grudge. He knows that God has a bigger plan, and it is good; one that can never be thwarted by the ways of men.
 - "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for **good**, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today" (Gn 50:20).
 - "We know that for those who love God all things work together for **good**, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28).
10. In short, there is **anointing/unction** on Joseph's life. Just as surely as preachers need "the anointing" in ministry, so do those in the business world. And as in the pulpit; some have it and some don't. "But you have been anointed by the Holy One..." (1 Jn 2:20; "you have an unction" KJV).

III. A Theology of Work: TGI Monday

A. Work is a place to live out **the image of God**.

God is a worker! He is creative and all that he does is excellent. He has gifted each of us with talents and abilities that are good and needed. Work allows us to become who he created us and redeemed us to be.

B. Work is a place to **love my neighbor**.

The second commandment is *not* to “evangelize our neighbor” but to love him/her. When we work, we can show the love of God in tangible and meaningful ways: to co-workers, to clients, to bosses, etc. We often give the impression that the goal of the gospel is to get worldly people to go to church. No. The goal of the gospel is to get church people to go into the world. TGI Monday.

C. Work is a place where I can **provide for my family**.

To be sure, ever since sin entered the world, there is an aspect of work that is tedious, toilsome, and painful (Gn 3:17–19). However, work enables us to provide for those we love the most. “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tm 5:7).

D. Work is a place of **temptation**.

Joseph’s work situation brought strong temptations: immorality, greed, worldliness, dishonesty, power, etc. Our true characters are shaped and then revealed by how we learn to resist evil seductions at work.

E. Work is a place of **witness**.

Sometimes this will mean verbal witness and sharing the gospel. But more often, this will mean simply living out the reality of a Christlike life. People are watching! Jesus sent the disciples into the world first and foremost to “be witnesses,” not to “do witnessing” (Acts 1:8).

F. Work is a place where I can **glorify God**.

O, how God was magnified and his purposes in the world expanded through Joseph at work. “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col 3:17).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Give some examples of men and women you have known who were powerful witnesses “at work.” What made their witness so effective?
2. From your own experience, what is the hardest part about being an effective witness at work?
3. Why do you think shepherding is such good training for leadership?
4. Does the church do enough to help Christians in the workplace? What could/should the church do?
5. Look again at the ten elements of “Joseph’s work ethic.” Which one spoke most powerfully to you? Why?
6. Share with your group one thing you can do to “glorify God” at your place of work. Pray for one another.

Laborare Est Orare

Author Unknown (1884)

*Lord Jesus was a carpenter, who wrought with saw and plane,
And did in Naz'reth thirty years a working man remain;
But while he wrought, his heart and thought were ever with the Lord;
How he might best construct his Church and preach the glorious Word.*

Refrain:

*Then working men, be brave, be strong to serve the Lord always;
Remember what Augustine said, "To labor is to pray."*

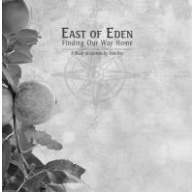
*Saint Peter was a fisherman, who toiled upon the wave;
"Henceforth shall thou catch men," said Christ, "and sinful souls shalt save."
"Thou art a rock and I will build my holy Church on thee;
The keys of heaven thou shalt hold, come follow after me."*

*Saint Paul, he was a tentmaker, and working at his trade
With them that were of self-same craft, for Christ he converts made.
"These hands," he said, "have ministered to my necessity;"
And herein gathered his reward, he made the gospel free.*

*The good physician, Luke, whose praise through all the churches rolls,
Like his great Master, toiled to save men's bodies and men's souls.
From him we learn those songs divine, which men and angels too
Sing day by day. O what weak man with zeal for God may do!*

*A rich young ruler came to Christ, "Lord, I will follow thee:
The ten commandments I have kept, what lacketh yet to me?"
"Give all thy wealth to feed the poor, and thou shalt win the crown."
Alas! He could not rise to that, his riches held him down.*

*God's saints in every age and clime, all in their several ways,
With heart and hand, in life and death, have labored for his praise:
And we too, brothers, wheresoe'er our humble lot may lie,
Can work with him, who was content, for us to work—and die!*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home
A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

THE TELL-TALE HEART

Genesis 42–44

I. Meanwhile, back at the ranch...

The story of Joseph up to this point has focused on events in Egypt, but in Genesis 42 the scene suddenly shifts, and we are taken back to **Canaan** where Jacob and his eleven sons are trying to survive. The famine is the immediate issue, but there are other, far more serious **obstacles** that are threatening to derail God's plan of redemption for the world. This reorients us to the **Big Story** God is writing in Genesis.

A. There is **famine** in the Land of Promise.

There are at least two theological questions here:

1. What do you do when the Promised Land resembles **Death Valley**? Isn't Canaan to be a place of milk and honey and abundance? Why does Egypt seem to be more blessed than Canaan?
2. But can Israel survive in Egypt? Will God's people be able to maintain their covenant **identity**, or will they be **assimilated** into Egyptian ways and thinking? Note: Jacob's decision to move the family to Egypt opens a period of **400** years that the Hebrews will remain there (see Gn 15:13–16).

B. There is **division** in the family of the covenant.

Theological question: Can the division be mended? Can the brokenness be healed? Is **reconciliation** even possible, and if so, **how** does it occur?

C. Where is the promised **seed**? (see Gn 3:15).

Genesis carefully traces the **transmission** of this promised "seed" that will one day come to redeem us and shows how the choice of the seed bearer is consistently **surprising**: Seth (not Cain), Shem (not Ham or Japheth), Isaac (not Ishmael), and Jacob (not Esau). John C. Lennox calls this the Seed Project.¹

Theological Question: But with Jacob's **12 sons**, it is not obvious who God's man is to pass on the promised seed. Is it Reuben (first born)? Simeon (second born)? Joseph (the favored and blessed)? Who is it?²

II. A Drama in Four Acts

A. Act I—Joseph's brothers' first trip to Egypt (Gn 42:1–38).

Jacob sends ten sons to Egypt to buy bread where they bow before Joseph.³ Speaking through an interpreter, Joseph treats them roughly and accuses them of being spies. They respond, "We are **honest men**." Really? To test their honesty, Joseph demands they return with their youngest brother, keeping Simeon as a hostage. He puts their money back in their sacks. Jacob is grieved that he has lost yet another

¹ Lennox, *Joseph*, 23ff.

² Hint: In the rest of the Bible, we can see the seed traced to David, and then ultimately to Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16).

³ In his dream as a youth, he has seen *eleven* stars bowing down to him (Gn 37:9). But here, only *ten* brothers are prostrate. Joseph realizes the dream isn't yet fulfilled.

son. **Reuben** makes a noble but stupid promise to bring Simeon home; and if he fails, he will kill two of his own sons!

Question: What do you imagine Joseph's emotions must have been when he saw his brothers whom he had not seen in 22 years?

B. Act II—Joseph's brothers' second trip to Egypt (Gn 43:1–34).

Jacob finally consents to let Benjamin go on a second trip for food. **Judah** offers himself as a pledge for Benjamin's safety. Joseph invites them to his home, and they feast together. Joseph seats the brothers in their birth order⁴ and shows favoritism to Benjamin. Once again, Joseph is overcome with emotion.⁵

C. Act III—Joseph devises a plan to test his brothers (Gn 44:1–34).

Joseph seems **conflicted**. Does he want reconciliation? Or perhaps, revenge? Why doesn't he reveal his identity? What is he waiting for? He devises a test to see if his brothers have truly repented of their evil past: will they treat Benjamin as they treated him 22 years ago? Hiding his own silver chalice in Benjamin's sack, Joseph sets the trap. Accusing Benjamin of theft, he plans to lock him up. But Judah steps forward and makes a dramatic plea for Benjamin's release, offering himself as a **substitute**.

Judah's speech (Gn 44:18–34) is a masterpiece of theological wisdom, emotional honesty, and persuasive rhetoric, setting him apart as the obvious **leader of the family**. His willingness to give his life so that Benjamin might live, shows that he understands the ways of God. Judah is clearly God's choice to lead the Seed Project. He will become the father of David, and then Jesus. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah" (Gn 49:10). Judah's mother had named him well: "Praise the Lord!"

D. Act IV—Reconciliation (Gn 45:1ff).

Judah's speech is effective! Bursting with emotion, Joseph finally reveals the truth: "I am Joseph." Though full reconciliation will take time, the division in the family has been addressed, and **healing** has begun. (Next week we'll focus on how **forgiveness** is the key element to bringing divided parties together again.)

III. Path to Reconciliation

Before the Bible offers a theological definition of a doctrine, often it **paints a picture**. In this story, we have a beautiful illustration of the doctrine of **reconciliation**. "To reconcile" means to restore friendly relations between; cause to coexist in harmony; be compatible; settle a disagreement; make one account consistent with another account. For Paul, this is the doctrine that explains both our own relationship with God through Christ and our ministry to others.

*¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ **reconciled** us to himself and gave us the ministry of **reconciliation**; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was **reconciling** the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of **reconciliation**. ²⁰Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal*

⁴ According to Henry Morris, the odds of seating 11 men in the right birth order is roughly 40 million to one.

⁵ Joseph is quite emotional during the entire story and weeps on at least five different occasions: Gn 42:24; 43:30; 45:2; 45:14–15; and 50:17.

*through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be **reconciled** to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18–20)*

The story of how Joseph and his brothers made things right shows us the indispensable ingredients of how **enmity** is dissolved, wounds are **healed**, and **unity** is restored. Whether the division is vertical (between persons and God) or horizontal (between persons), the steps are the same.⁶

A. Guilt

1. Edgar Allan Poe wrote a short story about the power of a **guilty conscience**; *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843). The story underscores the Biblical teaching that:
 - **Lies** and cover-ups cannot erase the torment of a guilty conscience.
 - **Time** does *not* heal all wounds.
 - The pain of conscience is often **worse** than the punishment!
 - “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Nm 32:23).
 - “The Lord does not forget the cry of the afflicted” (Ps 9:12).
2. Joseph’s brothers have committed a **perfect crime**. Twenty-two years have passed; no one will ever know. But God has arranged circumstances to force them to **confront** their carefully hidden past.
 - They said to one another, “In truth we are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he begged us, and we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us” (Gn 42:21).
 - Reuben answered, “Did I not tell you not to sin against the boy. But you did not listen. So now there comes a reckoning for his blood” (Gn 42:22).
 - (When one brother finds his money in his sack) they turned trembling to one another, saying, “What is this that God has done to us?” (Gn 42:28).
 - Judah said, “What shall we speak? Or how can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants...” (Gn 44:16).
3. There can be no true reconciliation until there is **conviction** of sin. “When the **Holy Spirit** comes, he will convict the world concerning sin” (Jn 16:8).
4. Theological Lesson: Sin does *not* disappear, and time does *not* heal all wounds. So, what can be done with a **guilty conscience**?

B. Confession.

1. The Greek word for “confess” means “to say the same thing; to agree.” Rather than trying to **deny**, **rationalize**, **justify**, **blame**, or **suppress**, I simply say, “I agree with God and his assessment of my actions and attitudes.”
2. David wrote about the power of confession:

*For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.*

*⁵ I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I **did not cover** my iniquity;*

⁶ In this lesson we will look at the first four steps. Next week, we’ll devote the entire lesson to the fifth step: forgiveness.

*I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. (Psalm 32:3–6)*

3. Martin Luther wrote: "There are two kinds of sin: one is **confessed**, and this no one should leave unforgiven; the other kind is **defended**, and this no one can forgive, for it refuses either to be counted as sin or to accept forgiveness."⁷
4. Confession has both a private and a public aspect (Jas 5:16). To be effective, confession should be **succinct**, **specific**, and **emotionally honest**.
God's promise is that if we confess our sins, he will "forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn 1:9).
5. Theological lesson: But confession **alone**, though helpful, can never heal a broken relationship. Forgiveness is **not synonymous** with reconciliation! In many instances, the one who confesses is not so much apologizing for a moral wrong or the pain he has caused, he is simply **sorry he got caught!** This leads to the importance of the next step...

C. Repentance.

1. Repentance means more than feelings of **remorse**. Judas had that (Mt 27:3–5). The Greek word means "change of **mind**." Repentance means a change of heart, a change of ways. More than feeling badly about our sins, repentance means that we have renounced them and turned from them.
2. The test Joseph devised concerning the silver goblet hidden in Benjamin's sack revealed that the brothers had indeed **changed**. Rather than abandoning Benjamin, as they had Joseph, they stood in solidarity with him.
3. Theological lesson: The Bible is clear that repentance is **indispensable** to reconciliation. "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish" (Lk 13:3, 5).

D. Substitution.

1. In offering himself as a guarantee for Benjamin's well-being, Judah illustrates the principle of substitution: someone takes the punishment and even death of another; one dies so the other can live. This only works when it is **freely offered** by the "redeemer" and motivated by **love**.
2. Something must be done about the sin committed! It cannot be lightly **dismissed**: "Don't worry about it. It was nothing." A **price** must be paid if reconciliation is to occur. Salvation may be free, but it is not **cheap!**
 - "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gn 2:17).
 - "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed" (Gn 9:6).
 - "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin" (Heb 9:22).
 - "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23).
3. The basic way this principle works is through **substitution**. The price for sin is paid, but by a substitute. This was graphically portrayed on the Day of **Atonement** (Yom Kippur), especially in the ritual with the **scapegoat**.

²¹ And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their

⁷ Quoted by John Lennox in *Joseph*, 176.

*transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. ²² The goat shall **bear** all their iniquities on itself to a remote area.... (Leviticus 16:21–22)*

4. In an ultimate manner, Jesus **bore** the sins of the world on the cross, he freely chose to take on himself the penalty our sins deserved, he died in our place!

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;

he was crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,

and with his wounds we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned—every one—to his own way;

and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:4–6)

5. Judah's offering of himself as a substitute for Benjamin points to something much bigger. This **Big Story** involves not Judah personally...

but his descendant, that great Lion of the tribe of Judah, the promised seed, the Messiah, Jesus Christ our Lord, who did give himself as a perfect substitute in dying for sinful men and women so that they could be reconciled to the Father.⁸

6. Theological lesson: We are all sinners, and this means we have only **two options**. Either we will bear our sins and pay their penalties, or we must find someone else who can.

E. Forgiveness.

Ultimately, the only way to bring healing for a broken relationship is through forgiveness. But this can only happen when there is guilt, confession, repentance, and substitution. Come back next week to see what this is and how it works.

⁸ Ibid, 197.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the primary truth that you learned from this lesson?
2. Choose one of the following incidents from history and discuss how the five elements of reconciliation were manifest (or not!) in each case. Which element was weakest or missing altogether? Describe how this element could have been added to the equation and how history might have been different if it had.
 - The Crusades
 - Broken promises by the U.S. government to Native Americans
 - Slavery
 - Watergate
 - The scandal with Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinski
3. Think of all the broken relationships and lack of unity in our country today. When was the last time you heard a sermon on conviction of sin, confession, repentance? Could there be a correlation between these two realities?
4. Think of a broken relationship in your own life (either current or past). In looking at the five ingredients of reconciliation, what is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

Prayer of Confession

The Book of Common Prayer

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men: we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy divine majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy on us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father.... (p. 331).

Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

Ruut Sallinen

*Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;
Jesus ready, stands to save you,
Full of pity, love and power.*

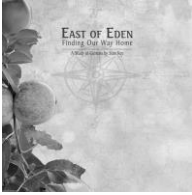
Refrain:

*I will arise and go to Jesus,
He will embrace me in His arms;
In the arms of my dear Savior,
O, there are ten thousand charms.*

*Come, ye weary, heavy-laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall;
If you tarry 'til you're better,
You will never come at all.*

*See Him prostrate in the garden,
On the ground your Maker lies;
On the bloody tree, behold him,
Sinner, will this not suffice?"*

*Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home
A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

RECONCILIATION: A GLIMPSE OF EDEN'S GATES

Genesis 45:1–15; 50:15–21

I. The Unnatural Act

A. In October of 2006, two dramatic stories were in the news:

- Five Amish schoolgirls were viciously **murdered** in Nickel Mines, PA.
- The Amish community **forgave** the murderer, and then reached out in love and grace to his widow and their three children.

The press struggled to determine which of these stories was more newsworthy. Violence, unfortunately, is routine. But forgiveness? That's almost **inexplicable!**

B. Perhaps no single word captures what the gospel is all about than **forgiveness**. It embraces both the **vertical** (Lk 24:47; Acts 2:38) and the **horizontal** (Mt 6:12; Eph 4:32) aspects of what Jesus came to make possible.

C. Revenge: How Sweet It Is?

1. One of the most natural instincts of the human condition is the passion to get even, to settle the score, to restore **moral balance**. If you hurt me, then I should hurt you in a similar manner. This reflects the **image of God** within us. It is a cry for **justice!** "It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Dt 19:21).¹
2. The world's literature reminds us that this desire for revenge is one of the classic themes of the stories we love²:
 - a. *The Iliad* (Homer). Menelaus (from Greece) seeks revenge against Paris (from Troy), who has stolen his wife Helen. He wages war to settle the score.
 - b. *The Count of Monte Cristo* (Alexander Dumas). Wrongfully imprisoned, Edmund Dantes spends years planning revenge. "How did I escape? With difficulty. How did I plan this moment? With pleasure."
 - c. *The Princess Bride* (movie). A young Spanish swordsman lives for the day he will be able to say to the man he is pursuing: "My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die."

D. Imagine the story of Joseph ending this way: "And Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! I've been waiting 22 years for this moment. Prepare to die! He, he, he.'" No!

¹ Though today this "law of retaliation" (*lex talionis*) is often considered barbaric and cruel, God actually gave it to limit cruelty, so that the punishment would fit the crime. Its purpose was to stop the insanity of an ever-increasing spiral of retaliation. This is one of the most fundamental principles of justice.

² These stories typically show the tragic results that come to the person consumed by the desire for revenge. It always leads to disillusionment and often ruin. A Chinese proverb says, "The man who opts for revenge digs two graves."

God is the author of this script. This story is in the Bible precisely because it is so counterintuitive. It demands a **supernatural** explanation.

E. Summary of the book of Genesis.

The story of Joseph's reconciliation with his brothers is the **climax** of Genesis. It's almost as if this scene summarizes what the book is all about! Thinking back through the chapters of Genesis, we could summarize the message this way:

1. God made humans and placed them in a perfect environment: Eden. Here there was perfect and harmonious **unity**. Just as God is one yet three, so his creation is meant to be a plurality of oneness, a union of plurality.
2. When sin came, the consequences were catastrophic. The unity was broken, and the harmony became discordant. The result was **alienation**:
 - a. Separation from **God**. Spiritual lostness—Where can he be found?
 - b. Separation from our **true selves**. Identity theft—Who am I?
 - c. Separation from our life's **purpose**. Mission—Why am I here?
 - d. Separation from **one another**. Who are my people? Where is my community?
 - e. Separation from **home**. Homesickness—Where is my true home?
3. God called Abraham and made a covenant with him and his family so that these separations could all be mended. Joseph's reunion with his family shows us what this looks like. Genesis 45 gives a hint of what God wants to do in and through our lives. Though we still must live "east of Eden," here we catch a glimpse of the garden gates. Using theological terminology, we can say that **forgiveness** makes possible **reconciliation**.

II. Genesis 45:1–15; 50:15–21. Brief Commentary.

Joseph and his brothers have been communicating through an **interpreter** (see Gn 42:23). But now, Joseph begins to speak to them in flawless Hebrew.

- A. Joseph's **emotions** become too powerful to contain (Gn 45:1–2, 14–15). This is the third time he weeps (see Gn 42:24; 43:30), but it will not be the last (Gn 50:17). This reminds us of the emotional transparency of both **David** and **Jesus**.
- B. Three times Joseph affirms that God is the one who sent him to Egypt (Gn 45:5, 7, 8). The brothers are to **blame** (guilt, sin), but God is **responsible** (sovereignty, providence). The ability to discern the difference is a game changer! Joseph's studies at Pit State University have caused him to become a theologian.
- C. It's obvious that Joseph has already **forgiven** his brothers for there is no trace of bitterness, hatred, or revenge. But it took Judah's speech (Gn 44:16–34) to enable Joseph to be ready for **reconciliation**.

III. Elements of Reconciliation

- A. Summary from our last lesson
 1. *Guilt*. Until the offender has experienced **conviction of sin**, the broken relationship will remain broken.
 2. *Confession*. Rather than denying, rationalizing, justifying, blaming, or suppressing their sin, the brothers **acknowledged** their guilt.

3. *Repentance.* More than feeling remorse for our sins, repentance means a **change of mind** and a change of heart.
 4. *Substitution.* Sinful acts of injustice can't be ignored, as if they didn't happen. Someone must **pay the penalty**. Either the guilty party must pay the price, or a substitute must be found.
- B. Now we are ready for the fifth element necessary for reconciliation: **forgiveness**. "Please forgive our transgressions," the brothers plead (Gn 50:17).

IV. What Forgiveness Is *Not*

- A. Forgiveness is *not* **forgetting**.

God can forget our sins (Is 38:17; 43:25; Mi 7:19), but you and I are not God! There is no "delete" button in our memory. Joseph could not pretend that the past never happened.³ Forgiveness is a **choice**, an act of the will. When we forgive, we agree to live with the consequences of someone else's sin. Clara Barton once commented on an offense by saying, "O yes, I remember having forgotten that." Corrie Ten Boom picturesquely said that when we are forgiven, Jesus throws our sins into the sea of God's forgetfulness and then puts a sign there that says, "**No fishing!**"

- B. Forgiveness is *not* **condoning**.

When Joseph forgave his brothers, he was not saying that what they did to him was okay. He was not excusing their **inexcusable** behavior. It's possible to forgive and at the same time agree that offenders be held accountable for their actions (be arrested, fined, fired, etc.). Forgiven sin still has **consequences**. Forgiveness means that, in those areas where you are in charge, you will not press the matter further. In ultimate terms, to forgive means that you are taking offenders **off your hook** and putting them on God's. Vengeance belongs to God, not to us (see Rom 12:19).

- C. Forgiveness is *not* **pretending**.

Many try to deal with the pain caused by someone's behavior by saying, "Oh, it doesn't really hurt" (denial), "They didn't really mean it" (dismissive), or "It was no big deal" (excusing). Often such persons extend the olive branch of "forgiveness" **prematurely**, primarily in an effort to ease their own misery. But pretending to make things right with someone who is not yet **trustworthy** and safe is not only naïve; it may be dangerous.

- D. Forgiveness is *not* **reconciliation**.

Many think forgiveness means they should be chummy again with the person who hurt them. No! To forgive an abuser doesn't mean that you should invite him back into the house! Has he expressed guilt, confession, and repentance? Reestablishing the relationship can only be based in trust, and trust must be **earned**.

Forgiveness is a **unilateral** act. It can be done regardless of the actions or inactions of the offender. It gets the poison out of our system before it hurts *us*! But reconciliation is **bilateral**. Reconciliation takes two meeting on common ground. It is only possible when mutual trust is firmly in place. Joseph had already forgiven his brothers, but he was not prepared to reconcile with them until he was certain they were safe.

³ Even though he named one of his sons Manasseh (God has made me forget), the very presence of that son would be a constant reminder of what he was trying so hard to forget (Gn 41:51).

V. What Forgiveness Is

- A. Perhaps the best definition of forgiveness is this: giving up **our right** to use what someone else did to us as a **weapon** against them.

Joseph clearly had the right to press charges and have his brothers arrested for kidnapping, child trafficking, slave trading, conspiracy, and obstruction of justice. In forgiving them, he gave up this right. He **absorbed** in himself (like a sponge) the horrific consequences of their actions. He broke the insanity of the ever-increasing **cycle of retaliation** that characterizes so much of human history. Mahatma Gandhi said: "If we practice the rule of an eye for an eye, we will eventually all be blind."

- B. How does this work?

1. See the big picture. Think **theologically**.

*⁵And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for **God sent me** before you to preserve life.... ⁷And **God sent me** before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but **God**... (Genesis 45:5-8)*

Joseph realizes that his brothers are to *blame*, but he knows that God is *responsible* for all that happened. We can debate whether God **causes** bad things to happen or whether he **permits** them, but reconciliation can only happen when we bow before a sovereign God and say: "Lord, what are **you** trying to do in and through this painful situation that you have allowed to happen?" "Man proposes, but God disposes" (Thomas à Kempis).

2. Stop trying to be God's **prosecuting attorney**.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:19-21)

To forgive people does *not* mean that you are pronouncing them innocent. No! It means you are taking them off your hook and putting them on God's. Remember, Jesus is our **advocate** (lawyer). Let him plead your case before the divine tribunal.

3. **Absorb** the pain.

"Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive."⁴ On **the cross**, Jesus forgave our sins by absorbing them into himself, like a sponge. He *became* sin (2 Cor 5:21). There, he forever gave up the right to use what we did as a weapon against us.

To a limited degree, we do the same thing whenever we forgive someone who has hurt us. This explains perhaps the lengthy process Joseph went through as he absorbed the reality of what it would mean to forgive his brothers. Christ sends us into the world to minister in the same way he ministered (though obviously not to the same degree). He showed them his nail-pierced hands and said, "As the Father sent me, **so send I you**" (Jn 20:20-21). He wants us "to

⁴ Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 115.

fill up, in our own bodies, what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ" (Col 1:24).
When death works in us, then life can work someone else (2 Cor 4:12).

4. When you are able, begin to let your **actions** express your theology.

Only at the end of the lengthy process was Joseph able to find the grace that enabled him to **embrace** his brothers (Gn 45:15). To be a family again took more than guilt, confession, repentance, substitution, and forgiveness. It took a miracle of grace. Remember the story of Corrie Ten Boom shaking hands with a former Nazi guard at Ravensbruck (*Tramp for the Lord*).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Define what it means to forgive. When and how did Joseph forgive his brothers?
2. Define what it means to be reconciled. When and how was Joseph reconciled with his brothers?
3. In what sense are we called to complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ (Col 1:24)?
4. Why is it important to distinguish between forgiveness and reconciliation?
5. "Forgive each other; just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph 4:32). Discuss this verse.

Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive

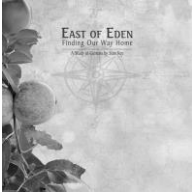
By Koine

*Forgive our sins as we forgive
You taught us, Lord, to pray,
But you alone can grant us grace
To live the words we say.*

*How can your pardon reach and bless
The unforgiving heart
That broods on wrongs and will not let
Old bitterness depart?*

*In blazing light your cross reveals
The truth we dimly knew:
What trivial debts are owed to us;
How great our debt to you!*

*Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls
And bid resentment cease;
Then, bound to all in bonds of love
Our lives will spread your peace.*



East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

THE LAST WORDS OF JOSEPH

Genesis 46–50

I. Famous Last Words

A. What people say as they face death often reveals the deepest **convictions** that have characterized their lives:

1. Jesus—“It is finished.”
2. Paul—“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”
3. John Wesley—“The best of all; God is with us.”
4. Nathan Hale—“I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country.”
5. Admiral Nelson—“Thank God, I have done my duty!”
6. Thomas Jefferson—“Is it the fourth?”

B. Joseph’s last words (which also serve as the last words of Genesis).¹

²⁴ And Joseph said to his brothers, “I am about to die, but God will visit you and bring you up out of this land to the land that he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” ²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, “God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” ²⁶ So Joseph died, being 110 years old. They embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt. (Genesis 50:24–26)

Joseph had lived in Egypt 93 years, had an Egyptian wife and an Egyptian name; he spoke, dressed, and shaved like an Egyptian; he worked for the Egyptian government; he loved Egypt and Egyptians; but he was *not* an Egyptian and Egypt was *not* his home. His **identity** was a child of the Covenant. His **home** was Canaan. See Exodus 13:19 for the fulfillment of this promise 400 years later.

II. Survey of Genesis 46–50.

A. Genesis 46: 1–4. God affirms that the move to Egypt is the right thing to do and gives Jacob three amazing promises:

1. I will make you a **great nation**. *Egypt* will be the womb where the nation of Israel gestates and prepares for birth.
2. I will do down **with you**. You will know my presence in *Egypt*.
3. I will **bring you up again**. *Egypt* is not the Promised Land, not your home.

B. Genesis 46:5–30. Jacob’s family (70 persons) moves to Egypt. When Jacob is reunited with Joseph (prince of Egypt), what did he think? What did he feel?

Very likely, feelings of disbelief, joy, awe, repugnance, and sorrow trip over one another in his soul. Is this really Joseph? Look, how superbly he is bedecked and

¹ See how the New Testament seizes on these words to summarize Joseph’s life of faith in Hebrews 11:22.

*appointed! But where is his beard, where his hair, and what mean these foreign trappings? Have I found him, or have I **lost him**?²*

- C. Genesis 46:31–47:7. The Hebrews settle in Goshen and keep sheep: “every shepherd is an **abomination** to the Egyptians” (Gn 46:34). The social distinction between Egyptians (upper class) and Jews (despised minority) is very clear (see Gn 43:32; Ex 8:26).³
- D. Genesis 47:7–12. Jacob **blesse**s Pharaoh, his social superior. Remember God’s promise to Abraham: “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gn 12:1–3). Though he shows respect, he does not bow down or refer to himself as “your servant.” He is not **bedazzled** by or envious of LL Egyptian power and glory!
- E. Genesis 47:13–26. Joseph saves Egypt but uses the global crisis as an occasion to turn the nation into a **slave state**. The Egyptians, however, seem to have only gratitude for his administrative policies: “You have saved our lives” (Gn 47:25).
- F. Genesis 47:27–31. Jacob lives 17 years in Egypt and prospers, but he makes Joseph promise: Don’t bury me in Egypt! Bury me in **Canaan** with my fathers.
- G. Genesis 48:1–22. Jacob decides there will be no tribe named “Joseph” (Had Joseph’s Egyptianization gone too far?). Instead, he claims Joseph’s two sons as his own, elevating **Ephraim** (2nd born) over **Manasseh** (1st born): two tribes in Israel.
- H. Genesis 49:1–27. Jacob blesses his sons and makes clear that “the Seed Project” is entrusted to **Judah**. “The scepter shall not depart from Judah” (Gn 49:10).
- I. Genesis 49:28–50:14. Jacob dies at the age of 147 and is embalmed (it takes 40 days), but he is buried **humbly** in Canaan, in the cave of Machpelah.
- J. Genesis 50:15–26. Joseph reaffirms his forgiveness for his brothers and dies, with clear instructions concerning his bones. He knows his true **identity** and his **home**.

Question: What are these five chapters about?

Answer: Here we are introduced to one of the greatest and most problematic issues in the Bible: What is the relationship between **Israel** (the covenant people of God) and **Egypt** (the world). What attitude and behaviors should the **Church** adopt in reference to the **World**?

III. Israel in Egypt

God clearly **wants** us to be in the world and to be a blessing to it, but the **risks** are great, and the stakes are high.

A. The default positions

Without a strategic plan, the meeting of the church and the world will, by default, result in one of two inevitable, tragic results:

1. **Assimilation**—The people of God (a minority group) will be swallowed up by the culture (the majority group). This can happen in one of two ways:
 - a. In a **desire to fit in**, the people of God become so like the world they lose their distinctive identity. This may be caused by love of the world, but

² Kass, 622.

³ By looking ahead in the Torah, we learn the kinds of things that caused the social and ethnic distinctions (antisemitism) between Egyptians and Jews: idolatry, sexual practices (incest, homosexuality, fornication, bestiality), sorcery, magic, shaving head and beard, treatment of the dead (mummification), treating a person as divine (Pharaoh), dietary rules, Sabbath, trades and professions (shepherding), etc.

it may be caused by a desire to make the gospel relevant (contextualized). Joseph came close to this model. Illustration: the man who loved yellow.

- b. The culture aggressively promotes **conformity** (Rom 12:2). It hates non-conformists and thus forces compliance. *Star Trek* episode of the Borg culture: “We are Borg. You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile.”
2. **Separation**—Motivated by **fear**, God’s people seek to isolate themselves from the world and live in separate communities (monasteries, ghettos, communes, countercultures, etc.). The Hebrews in Egypt became shepherds and lived in Goshen, lest they be contaminated. Illustration: the Amish.

Problem: God loves **Egyptians!** He wants to reach them through his covenant people! *Both* these approaches fail to achieve God’s purpose. But how can I live in the world without becoming either **worldly** or a **hermit**? I’m so glad you asked!

B. The Strategic Options⁴.

Christians who take seriously their calling to be witnesses in the world (salt and light), tend to fall into three categories:

1. Opposition: Christ **against** culture.

The world (Egypt, Babylon) is inherently evil and **irredeemable**. The world and the church are like oil and water: they don’t mix. The church must be vigilant lest she be polluted and compromised by worldliness (2 Cor 6:14–18; Jas 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15–17). Some examples: The monastic tradition, the Puritans, the Quakers, and some fundamentalists, etc.

2. Compromise: Christ **of** culture.

The goal is to **Christianize** the culture and to find those elements of culture that can be used for Kingdom purposes (music, calendar, structures, technology, etc.). As the nation of Israel was a theocracy, so the goal is to build the kingdom of God on earth. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” (Ps 33:12). Some examples: The notion of Christendom (Western Europe and the crusades, colonialism, State Churches, etc.), Liberation Theology (Marxist revolution as a way to free the oppressed), and some in the “Christian Right” (America is a Christian nation).

3. Paradoxical tension: Christ **above** culture.

No human effort will establish the **Kingdom of God** on earth. This will only happen when Christ returns at the end of the age. In the meantime, we should love our neighbors, evangelize the lost, and transform culture (reform oppressive structures, redeem the arts, practice economic fairness, build hospitals and schools, etc.). We must obey the Cultural Mandate (have dominion over creation), the Great Commandment (love our neighbor) and the Great Commission (disciple the nations). Some examples: Augustine (Western Europe), John Calvin (Geneva), Roger Williams (Rhode Island), John Wesley (antislavery, labor laws, etc.), etc.

⁴ The classic presentation of this issue is H. Richard Niebuhr’s book *Christ and Culture*. This is a must-read for Christians who think seriously about these matters.

C. The Tactics.

The Jews made some tactical decisions when they went to Egypt that enabled them to maintain their covenant identity for **400 years** in a foreign land:

1. *Location.* They lived apart, in the land of Goshen, **separated** from centers of Egyptian culture along the Nile River.
2. *Profession.* They were shepherds, an abomination to Egyptians. Thus, the Jews were a lower **social class**. They would not assimilate.
3. *Morality.* Joseph's ethics (integrity, honesty, **sexual conduct**, etc.) set him apart.
4. *Religion.* Once the Mosaic Law was established, God's people kept their identity (even in Babylon) by **Sabbath** observance, diet, language, dress, circumcision, etc.

IV. Application

Our situation today is obviously very different from that of the Hebrews living in Egypt 2,500 years ago. The strategies chosen and the tactics used to live out our faith, therefore, will be quite different. However, the **principles** at work are the same—and so are the **risks**.

A. Our evangelical heritage

Think about our own evangelical heritage here in America and some strategies and tactics our spiritual ancestors have used to **influence** the culture, to **evangelize** the lost, to **preserve** their Christian identity. For example:

- *Causes and political movements:* abolition (slavery), prohibition (alcohol), Sunday blue laws, pro-life movement, gay rights, etc.
- *Personal morality:* smoking, social drinking, movies, music, home schooling, tattoos and body piercing, hair, clothing, jewelry, cosmetics, etc.

B. What's at stake.

We can debate how successful our ancestors were, but we must recognize how **difficult** these choices are. The right path is narrow, and there are ditches on both sides of the road. To fall into the error of either assimilation or separation will have tragic results. Primarily, it will mean that:

1. We have failed to understand our true **calling** and compromised the truth of the gospel. When the ditch (either side) becomes permanent, our very salvation is in jeopardy.
2. Egypt (Babylon, the world) will remain lost in sin and **spiritual darkness** forever. If the salt loses its saltiness (Mt 5:13), if the light in the church becomes darkness (Mt 6:23), if the voice of truth is silenced... then all is lost.

C. A letter to exiles living in Babylon

In about 590 BC, Jeremiah wrote a letter from Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylon (800 miles away). His message is surprisingly applicable to Christians today trying to **survive, thrive, and evangelize** the pagan culture where they have been called to live. We might call the letter, "Babylon: A Survivor's Guide."

⁴Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. ⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters; take

wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷ But seek the welfare [shalom] of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. ⁸ For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, ⁹ for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord.

¹⁰ For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare [shalom] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile. (Jeremiah 29:4–14)

1. Remember **who** you are and **whose** you are.
Verify your identity and your true home. Make sure of your citizenship in the City of God (1 Pt 2:9–12). You may live in Babylon, but you are *not* Babylonian. The inner pain you feel is called **homesickness**.
2. Settle down and **bloom** where you are planted.
Like living in a refugee camp, you are a displaced person. You will be there longer than you think. As much as possible, respect your environment, but live your faith openly, passionately, and authentically. Be salt and light. **Be** a witness and, when possible, **do** witnessing.
3. **Love** the Babylonians.
Seek the **shalom** of Babylon (Jer 29:7). Be a blessing to your pagan neighbors. God so loves the world that he sent his Son for them, too!
4. Choose your **pastors** carefully.
Don't listen to Ahab, Zedekiah, Shemaiah, and Hananiah (see Jer 29:15–32); don't go to their churches or read their books promising you your best life now. They are **false prophets**, saying the exile will last only two years when it will last seventy (see Jer 28:2–4).
5. **Seek** the Lord.
The only real security in Babylon is to continually seek the Lord with all your heart. When you do, he gives you a **future** bright with hope (Jer 29:13–14).
6. Be **in** the world but not **of** the world.
Reject both assimilation and separation. Live in the **tension!** Why? So that the world might be saved. In his final evening with his disciples, this was perhaps the primary message Jesus wanted them to understand (Jn 15:19; 17:14–19; 21–23).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

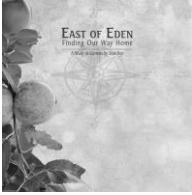
1. Describe why Israel's sojourn in Egypt was so important.
2. In your own Christian life, do you have more of a tendency to assimilate with the culture or to separate from the culture? Why do you think this is so?
3. What about your church? Does it tend more toward assimilation or toward isolation?
4. In what ways are Christians today being called to be different from the culture?
5. In what ways are Christians today being called to be similar to the culture?
6. What is the main thing you learned from the lesson today?

This World Is Not My Home

Jim Reeves

*This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through;
My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.*

*Oh lord you know I have no friend like you,
If heaven's not my home then lord what will I do.
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door,
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.*



East of Eden

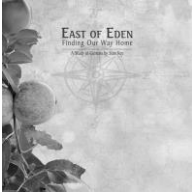
Finding Our Way Home

A Study of Genesis with Stan Key

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East of Eden

Finding Our Way Home

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ANSWERS

The Magnificent Limp

- I. (A) God; the end of himself; (B) second work of grace; (C) face; terrified; with God
- II. (A) ladder; (B) 400 men; deliver me; unworthiness; clearing his thinking; bold; (C) bribe; restitution; (D) interpret; (E) limping; face; (F) two ways of life; altar
- III. (A) wrestling; intimate; (B) started; God; (C) dark; alone; lengthy period; the will; (D) confessing; self-aware; (E) cling, hold on; new name; blessing; (F) limp; significance
- IV. (A) God; other people; circumstances; demonic forces; (B) my brother; vertical; horizontal; (C) surrender; clinging; death sentence; (D) sanctification; transformation; (E) badge of honor; losing; magnificent; (E1) humbling; (E2) visible; (E3) painful; (E4) slows one down; (E5) weaker; (E6) permanent; (E7) non-threatening; (F) benediction; face; countenance [face]

#METOO

- I. (A) rape; murder; plunder; God; (A1) talk about; (A2) confusing; real world; (A3) interpret; apply; (B) not easy; (B1) never speaks; voiceless; (B2) hyper-sensitive; sanity; biblical reflection
- II. (A) defiled; (A1) initiates; blame the victim; dangerous; (A2) saw; seized; lay with; humiliated; (A3) don't be fooled; (A4) object; person; (A5) legitimize; (B) passive and silent; (B1) emotionally detached; fill the void; (B2) outrageous; entire nation; (C1) apology; before marriage; (C2) intermarriage; assimilation; (D) deceive; (D1) blasphemy; (D2) deceiving; (E) avenge; (E1) murder; plundered; (E2) whore
- III. really messed up; permits; (A) love the world; seductive; assimilation; thinking; distinguished; (B) proper order; leave; cleave; one flesh; reversed; normal; (C) how I respond; (C1) passivity; (C2) normal; (C3) violence; prepare us; (D) two people; international incident; huge implications

The Purpose of Pits

- I. (A) one third; (A1) History; (A2) interpersonal relationships; (A3) Theology; (B) no; godly; (C) reversals; (C1) daddy's favorite; (C2) the pit; (C3) master; (C4) the prison; (C5) prime minister; (D) evil; good; 50/20 vision
- II. (A) Dysfunctional; highlights; (A1) favoritism; (A1a) damage; (A1b) privately; jealous; (A1c) scars; condemns; (A2) rivalry; (A2a) major theme; (A2b) tattletale; spoiled brat; braggart; (B1) conspire; pit; minor; abuse; victim; (B2) inconsolable; (B3) Egypt
- III. (B1) Confess; (B2) inability; (B3) prayer; (B4) Wait; (B5) Love; (B6) tell the world

Here's to You, Mrs. Potiphar

- I. (A) hedonism; (B) married; seduction; (C) opposites; (D) identity; worldliness; Egyptian
- II. (A) prospers and thrives; (A1) eunuch; (A2) Yahweh; (A3) blessing of God; (B) resists seduction; sexual harassment; (B2) betrayal of trust; God; (B3) false accusation; husband; race card; (C) cast into prison; (C1) suspicious; (C2) defend himself; (C3) steadfast love

- III. (A1) Beautiful; (A2) Wealthy; (A3) Bored; (A4) Confident; (A5) Trapped; (B1) handsome; (B2) social superior; (B3) alone; (B4) constant; (B5) justify; (C) prepared; wants us to talk; (C1) relationship; too late; (C2) Run; stand and fight; turn and flee; (C3) eyes; forbidden fruit; bounce; (C4) accountable; Katy; (C5) fire; hotter; expulsive power; Sirens; shipwreck; physical restraint; magic harp; (D) annihilate; sanctify

Faith@Work

- I. (A) prison; (A1) notices; cares; (A2) bears witness; (A3) injustice; (B) advice; (B1) magicians or wise men; (B2) pit; (B3) shaves; (B4) humility; authority; (C) new name; wife; (C1) Spirit of God; (C2) never; (C3) Hebrew
- II. workplace; (A) influential; (A1) shepherd; (A2) manager/steward; (A3) General Manager/ Executive Director/CEO; (A4) Prime Minister/Grand Vizier; (B) the Lord; exceptional; blessing; successful; blessed; moral compass; persecution; favor; succeed; Spirit of God; Egypt; (C1) Pit; leadership training; (C2) open and verbal; (C3) integrity; (C4) compassion; (C5) humble; (C6) excellence; ordinary; (C7) small things; (C8) content; circumstances; there; learned; (C9) bitter; good; good; (C10) anointing/unction
- III. (A) the image of God; (B) love my neighbor; (C) provide for my family; (D) temptation; (E) witness; (F) glorify God

The Tell-Tale Heart

- I. Canaan; obstacles; Big Story; (A) famine; (A1) Death Valley; (A2) identity; assimilated; 400; (B) division; reconciliation; how; (C) seed; transmission; surprising; 12 sons
- II. (A) honest men; Reuben; (B) Judah; (C) conflicted; substitute; leader of the family; (D) paints a picture; reconciliation; enmity; healed; unity; (A1) guilty conscience; Lies; Time; worse; (A2) perfect crime; confront; (A3) conviction; Holy Spirit; (A4) guilty conscience; (B1) deny; rationalize; justify; blame; suppress; (B2) did not cover; (B3) confessed; defended; (B4) succinct; specific; emotionally honest; (B5) alone; not synonymous; sorry he got caught; (C1) remorse; mind; (C2) changed; (C3) indispensable; (D1) freely offered; love; (D2) dismissed; price; cheap; (D3) substitution; Atonement; scapegoat; bear; (D4) bore; (D5) Big Story; (D6) two options

Reconciliation: A Glimpse of Eden's Gates

- I. (A) murdered; forgave; inexplicable; (B) forgiveness; vertical; horizontal; (C1) moral balance; image of God; justice; (D) supernatural; (E) climax; (E1) unity; (E2) alienation; (E2a) God; (E2b) true selves; (E2c) purpose; (E2d) one another; (E2e) home; (E3) forgiveness; reconciliation
- II. interpreter; (A) emotions; David; Jesus; (B) blame; responsible; (C) forgiven; reconciliation
- III. (A1) conviction of sin; (A2) acknowledged; (A3) change of mind; (A4) pay the penalty; (B) forgiveness
- IV. (A) forgetting; choice; No fishing!; (B) condoning; inexcusable; consequences; off your hook; (C) pretending; prematurely; trustworthy; (D) reconciliation; earned; unilateral; bilateral
- V. (A) our right; weapon; absorbed; cycle of retaliation; (B1) theologically; God sent me; God sent me; God; causes; permits; (B2) prosecuting attorney; advocate; (B3) absorb; the cross; so send I you; (B4) actions; embrace

The Last Words of Joseph

- I. (A) convictions; (B) identity; home
- II. (A1) great nation; (A2) with you; (A3) bring you up again; (B) lost him; (C) abomination; (D) blesses; bedazzled; (E) slave state; (F) Canaan; (G) Ephraim; Manasseh; (H) Judah; (I) humbly; (J) identity; home; Israel Egypt; Church; World
- III. wants; risks; (A1) Assimilation; (A1a) desire to fit in; (A1b) conformity; (A2) Separation; fear; Egyptians; worldly; hermit; (B1) against; irredeemable; (B2) of; Christianize; (B3) above; Kingdom of God; (C) 400 years; (C1) separated; (C2) social class; (C3) sexual conduct; (C4) Sabbath
- IV. principles; risks; (A) influence; evangelize; preserve; (B) difficult; (B1) calling; (B2) spiritual darkness; (C) survive; thrive; evangelize; (C1) who; whose; homesickness; (C2) bloom; Be; do; (C3) Love; shalom; (C4) pastors; false prophets; (C5) Seek; future; (C6) in; of; tension

I Want a Principle Within

By Charles Wesley (1749)

*I want a principle within
of watchful, godly fear,
a sensibility of sin,
a pain to feel it near.*

*I want the first approach to feel
of pride or wrong desire,
to catch the wandering of my will,
and quench the kindling fire.*

*From thee that I no more may stray,
no more thy goodness grieve,
grant me the filial awe, I pray,
the tender conscience give.
Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make;
awake my soul when sin is nigh,
and keep it still awake.*

*Almighty God of truth and love,
to me thy power impart;
the mountain from my soul remove,
the hardness from my heart.
O may the least omission pain
my reawakened soul,
and drive me to that blood again,
which makes the wounded whole.*



O for a Closer Walk with God

By William Cowper

(Sung to the tune *It Came upon the Midnight Clear*)

*O for a closer walk with God
A calm and heavenly frame
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb.
Where is the blessedness I knew
When I first saw the Lord?
Where is that soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and His word?*

*What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.
Return, O holy Dove! return
Sweet messenger of rest!
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn
And drove Thee from my breast.*

*The dearest idol I have known
Whate'er that idol be
Help me tear it from Thy throne
And worship only Thee.
So shall my walk be close with God
Calm and serene my frame
So purer light shall mark the road
That leads me to the Lamb.*



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