← Genesis	⇔ ≔
Session 6: But God	
SESSION GOALS	
Every session has specific goals—things you want your group to walk away knowing, feeling, and committing to do.	
Main Idea We can trust that God is working, even in our difficult circumstances, to accomplish his larger purposes.	
Head Change To know that God can use our suffering to further his purposes.	
Heart Change To feel confident God has not forgotten us in our struggles and that our pain is never meaningless.	
Life Change To remember during hardships that God is still working and to trust he will not let our suffering be in vain.	
OPEN	
Name a famous family in politics, history, or the church. What made them famous, and what about them do you	
find interesting?	
As we've seen over the past several sessions, Genesis largely follows the family of Abraham—arguably one of	
the most famous families in history. We've learned about Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, and now we're ending our	
study with the life of Joseph. Genesis devotes fourteen chapters to the saga of Joseph, the beleaguered favorite	
son of Jacob. This extensive narrative covers his life from age seventeen through young adulthood, marriage,	
fatherhood, and finally his reunion with his family. In this session, Charlie Dates will explore why Joseph suffered	
and how God used his life for a greater purpose.	

READ	
Read Genesis 37:9–28; 39:1–40:23; 41:25–40; 41:55–42:23; 43:15–34; 44:24–45:15.	
Note : We have made a daily reading guide for the book of Genesis so that you can read Joseph's whole story and understand the context of this book. You can find the reading plan at the end of this study in Go Deeper Section 3 .	
WATCH	
Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Charlie Dates's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.	
What must we remember about God when we think our lives are "tangled and meaningless"?	
What blessings does the providence of God bring to Joseph's life (and ours)?	
Show Session 6: But God (12 minutes).	
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DISCUSS

Charlie opened with an illustration about his grandmother sewing a design into socks. He looked up and saw the backside of them and could not understand her logic until she invited him to see her perspective. In the same way, Joseph's life doesn't seem to make sense until we look at it from God's perspective.	
He was his father's favorite child but was sold into slavery and lived a life of injustice and strife. He was unjustly accused and imprisoned, even though he was innocent and upright. He thrived in prison but spent years forgotten in a prison cell. Then in a surprising turn of events, Joseph was raised up as the second-in-command of all Egypt.	
But at the end of his life, Joseph was not confused. He saw his life from God's perspective and says, "You	
planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people."	
What elements of Joseph's story stand out to you? What do you think God was doing through all of the ups and	
downs of Joseph's life?	
Life is not always kind to us. Some of us suffer unjustly while others live with illness, natural disasters, and other events related to living in a fallen world. When something difficult happens, what's your initial reaction?	
Joseph's story shows us that God is aware of our	
circumstances and has a purpose for them. In what ways can knowing God is aware and working through your	
current circumstances be an encouragement to you?	
Joseph appeared to understand that God had redeemed	
the evil things done to him, using it to bring about great good. But we don't know how long it took him to realize	
that God was working to redeem his pain. For us it can be easy to judge God for the pain in our lives instead of	
looking forward to God's greater redemption. What does your pain make you think about God? Do you think it is	
possible for God to redeem your pain?	
What would it look like to trust God with your pain?	
Note : To explore the curious story of Judah and Tamar in Genesis 38, go to Go Deeper Section 1 below.	
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Read Genesis 39.	
During his years as a slave, Joseph prospered because of his integrity. They quickly realized he was highly capable and—more importantly—trustworthy. How does Joseph's integrity under such difficult circumstances inspire you? In what ways can you emulate his work ethic?	
Joseph's life demonstrates God's providence—his care and control over his creation—over and over again. For instance, when the butler finally remembered Joseph, Joseph's good fortune seems like a lucky fluke. But as he told his brothers later in Genesis 44:4—8, he knew his reversal from slave to Pharoah's lieutenant happened because God intended it to happen. Where have you seen evidence of his providence in your past? In what ways does God's providence change the way you react to hard times?	
How does the idea of God's providence affect your faith in your current situation?	
Read Genesis 44:18–34.	
When Judah appealed to Joseph on behalf of Benjamin, Joseph realized his brother had matured. Judah wasn't the same petulant, jealous brother that sold him into slavery; he had become self-sacrificing, thoughtful, and loving. In what ways have you seen people's character change for the better? In what ways can knowing change is possible help you forgive and even pray for people who have wronged you?	
Note : For more insight into Jacob's final blessings on his children in Genesis 48–49, go to Go Deeper Section 2 below.	
As Charlie noted toward the end of the video, God's plan to rescue Joseph involved much more than just his own life. God was fulfilling his promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by preserving his covenant family in Egypt. What difficult circumstances are you facing right now? What could it look like to patiently bear your current trials and trust God's providence over everything that happens to you?	
If you're not in a difficult circumstance, whom could you encourage with Joseph's story this week?	

LAST WORD

As Genesis ends with God's chosen people safely tucked away in the only place that could save them, we are meant to marvel at God's love, care, and faithfulness. Starting with Eve, he promised the coming of a savior. He kept Noah and chose Abraham, provided the miraculous birth of Isaac, then allowed Jacob to be fruitful. Jacob and his children needed rescue, and God made sure it happened. We don't always understand his ways, but we can always trust his word.	
What has studying the book of Genesis taught you about God's character? His plan for his people?	
The stories of Israel's beginnings tell us more about God than the people he worked through. Through flawed yet beloved children, God revealed his faithfulness, patience, generosity, care, and sovereignty. Let what you've learned about God's nature encourage you through times of hardship or grief or failure. He hasn't changed, and he never will.	
Note : We have made a daily reading guide for the book of Genesis so that you can read these chapters and understand their context. You can find the reading plan at the end of this study in Go Deeper Section 3 .	
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GO DEEPER

This section has two potential functions:	
1. It can supplement your small group discussion with	
topics your group may be interested in. We've	
highlighted where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide. As	
the leader, it would be good to familiarize yourself with	
this section just in case your conversation turns to one of these topics.	
2. These sections can also function as short	
devotionals to carry you through the week until your	
next group meeting. Consider using these sections to deepen your group's study of the book of Genesis.	
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1. Tamar's Impact on Judah (Genesis 38)	
Shortly after the brothers sold Joseph into slavery, the	
biblical text shifts from Joseph to Judah, the mastermind behind the brothers' plot. This curious chapter tells a dark	
tale of betrayal, seduction, trickery, and righteousness?	
Yes.	
Read Genesis 38:6–11.	
Read Genesis 36.0–11.	
In the Old Testament, it was customary for a widow to	
marry her deceased husband's younger brother or his	
nearest male relative. It is unheard of today, but was so common then that it came to be known as "levirate law."	
In those days, a widow had no way to provide for herself	
or her family, so by marrying her husband's brother, she	
gained stability and security while her husband's inheritance remained in his family.	
intentance remained in his family.	
Judah's eldest son, Er, married a Canaanite woman	
named Tamar. After Er, a wicked man, died, she married	
his brother Onan, another wicked man, who soon died.	
Now read 38:12–26.	
Judah was obligated to provide for Tamar but resisted giving her to his youngest son. Tamar, realizing she'd	
been treated unrighteously, disguised herself as a local	
prostitute and slept with Judah himself (as her father-in-	
law, he was her last option in the levirate custom). Her	
ploy worked. When Judah heard his daughter-in-law was pregnant, he assumed the worst and condemned her	
immorality. But when she exposed him with proof that he	
was the father, he realized the truth and repented,	

confessing, "She is more in the right than I." Why is Judah's confession of wrongdoing so unusual considering his stature in his culture and what we've seen of him before now?	
Do you feel it is hard or easy for you to admit you are wrong? What might be an obstacle to confession for you?	
The next time we see Judah, he's bargaining with Pharoah's second-in-command, not realizing it was his brother, offering his life in place of Benjamin's (see 43:8–9; 44:18–34). He'd matured from being a jealous, selfish man to the leader of his family—willing to sacrifice his own life for the sake of his father's love of Benjamin. He knew his guilt regarding Joseph and was ready to make amends. The only clue Scripture offers us to his character arc is the interlude with Tamar.	
 Tamar forced Judah to see his faults and sinfulness, changing him from a selfish brother to sacrificial son. Jacob's blessing in chapter 49:8–10 reflected the change he saw in his son: he named Judah as the one through whom the "ruler" would come. Indeed, generations later God would elevate his tribe: Ruth 4:17–22; 1 Samuel 16:12–13—He chose David, from the tribe of Judah, to be his chosen king of Israel. Micah 5:2—The coming Messiah was predicted to come from Judah. Matthew 1:1—Jesus is identified as a son of David. Revelation 5:5—Jesus is proclaimed as the victorious Lion of Judah. 	
 As for Tamar, future generations blessed her name: Ruth 4:12—The women of Bethlehem bless Ruth and Naomi with, "may your family be like that of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah." Matthew 1:3—She appears by name, along with just four other women, in the genealogy of Jesus. In what does Judah's transformation give you hope for your own life? How have you seen God transform you? 	
The turning point in Judah's life came when he confessed his wrongdoing. What do you need to confess to God? To others? What could it look like to confess this week? rightnow MEDIA	

	2. Jacob's Blessings to His Sons (Genesis 48–49) As Jacob prepared to die, he pronounced specific blessings on each of his sons. But before talking with them, he called Joseph in with his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. The patriarch then did two surprising things. Read Genesis 48:5–7.	
	Jacob tells Joseph that instead of giving one-twelfth of his land to Joseph—an equal share with his brothers—he was going to claim Joseph's sons Manasseh and Ephraim as his own. In doing so, he gave Joseph a double share of the inheritance.	
	Joseph placed his father's hands on the heads of his sons: Jacob's right hand on Manasseh the oldest and his left on the younger, Ephraim. But Jacob switched his hands and pronounced a blessing that proclaimed the "younger brother will be greater" than the older.	
	We've seen this pattern of inverting younger for older before in God elevating Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau despite the cultural norms of the day. While the culture may have set a pattern for power and status, God will choose whom he will choose. In what ways has God worked contrary to your own expectations?	
	When the people of Israel returned to Canaan after the Exodus, Ephraim became a dominant tribe in the north of the country (Joshua 17:17). In the days division after Solomon's reign, the northern kingdom of Israel is often referred to as Ephraim and the southern kingdom as Judah. Yet, despite Jacob's intentions, Ephraim did not become the ultimate leader of Israel. As we saw in Go Deeper Section 1, Judah became the tribe God chose to produce the savior of his people.	
	How do you react when your plans don't work out? What does the story of Joseph and Judah teach you about God's sovereign power over our futures?	
	Think of your plans for the next few months or even years. Lay them out in prayer to God, surrendering them to his will and purpose. Pray that God gives you peace as you let him lead you.	
ri	3. Weekly Reading Plan Genesis is a long book, and we won't be able to study every verse of it during each of these sessions. This	

reading plan will help you familiarize yourself with the entirety of the book so that you can dig more deeply into God's Word. Some weeks will have more reading than others, so feel free to complete the daily readings at a pace that makes the most sense to your group.

Session six focused on Joseph's travails and successes, but it also helped us see how God works behind the scenes to accomplish bigger plans than we could see through our limited perspectives. Joseph's slavery led to Israel's salvation, a necessary event in the big picture of salvation for all people. The patriarchs show themselves to be frail and fallen people yet exactly the ones God chose to work out his redemption plan for all peoples.

<u>Day 1</u>: Joseph: From Slave to the Palace (Genesis 37, 39–41)

<u>Day 2</u>: Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38)

Day 3: Joseph's Brothers Seek Food (Genesis 42–44)

Day 4: Family Reunited (Genesis 45–47)

<u>Day 5</u>: Blessings and Legacy (Genesis 48–50)