

## Reading Schedule for February 27 – March 5, 2017

We will complete our reading of the Book of Genesis as our exciting launch to the New Year, and continue with the story of God's people through Exodus 20. One of the main aspects of the closing of Genesis is Jacob blessing his sons. It is the significance of blessing your children that has made a profound affect on my life. I hope you will ask God how to apply this truth to your life.

**February 27 – Genesis 46:1-34:** “I am God, the God of your father,” he said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there.” (v.3) God is very active in communicating his desires with his people. Here is another encounter that reveals God's will to Jacob through a vision. There is nothing better than being assured of God's direction in your life. When I sense God leading me, I want to embrace it 100%. The devil will try to cause me to doubt God's direction, or the negative input of others will dampen my enthusiasm. My own questioning can weaken my resolve to be committed to following God's leading in my life. Whenever anyone says to me, “I'm not sure that God even wanted me to marry my spouse,” I know that their doubts are unfounded. Even when human error is involved, God is sovereign. His direction is always right. Remain faithful to his direction and he will bless your life. Do you agree? How do you see that truth in this story?

**February 28 – Genesis 47:1-12:** “Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Your father and your brothers have come to you, and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock.’” (v. 5 & 6) Even when things were the worst for Joseph, and he might have questioned what God was up to, the results of God's watchful care over Joseph's life are being fully accomplished in this short reading. Joseph faithfully obeyed God in the thick and thin, and we read about the exciting results. Last night in the Bible study we ended the prayer time with the hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness.” I am sure Joseph questioned God's faithfulness during his dark days as a young man, but in this story we are seeing the certainty of God's faithfulness. I want you to have a renewed confidence that God is faithful, he loves you and he has your best in mind, now and into the future. May your trust in him grow even as you see how clearly it is displayed in the life of Joseph. What stands out to you in these 12 verses?

**March 1 – Genesis 47:15-31** “‘You have saved our lives,’ they said. ‘May we find favor in the eyes of our lord; we will be in bondage to Pharaoh.’” (v.25) Joseph made quite an impression upon the Egyptians. It is clear that they are saved because of Joseph's insight, and how God had led him to save the Egyptians from certain starvation. Even though Pharaoh's share is 1/5<sup>th</sup>, a more selfish administrator would demand more. But Joseph remains gracious and wise at the same time. Most leaders are questioned by the people. It is interesting to me that Joseph is held in such high regard. His “approval rating” would have been very high. I am sure that is because of God's favor on his life. How do you respond to this reading today?

**March 2 – Genesis 48:1-22:** “But Israel reached out his right hand and put it on Ephraim's head, though he was the younger, and crossing his arms, he put his left hand on Manasseh's head, even though Manasseh was the firstborn.” (v.14) I can't

help but think of Jacob's own personal journey as being the younger son to Isaac. Would there be any connection to Jacob blessing Ephraim instead of Manasseh? Joseph tries to correct his father, but Jacob is emphatic that Ephraim would be blessed ahead of his firstborn brother. History would reveal that the tribe of Ephraim would be the tribe leading the people into the Promised Land. It might even be thought that the Messianic line would go through Ephraim, and also include Joseph, but we know that God put his favor on Judah instead. This is another fascinating aspect of the story. Joseph marries Egyptian women and that may be the reason he is not the one that God would choose to carry on the line of the Messiah. How do you respond to this chapter? What gets your attention?

**March 3 – Genesis 49:1-28:** “Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you.” (v.8) Judah receives a long and positive blessing from his father, highlighting the positive qualities of leadership that he displayed through wisdom and maturity. It is remarkable that we have such a high regard for Joseph, but Judah is portrayed as being held in highest esteem by his brothers – even more so than Joseph. They grew up with Judah and seemingly affirmed him the most. The meaning of “The scepter will not depart from Judah” is clear – that Judah's line will deliver the promised Messiah Jesus. I enjoy having a grandson named Judah because of the changes God made in Judah, and the promises that were given to him, displaying the favor and blessing of God. How do you respond to Jacob's words of blessing? What do you learn from them?

**March 4 – Genesis 49:29-50:26:** “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” (50:20) I have cited this verse so many times that I could not have missed it as we closed the Book of Genesis. This is a divine spiritual principle. God brought good from the brother's evil deed. Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph. The cupbearer's neglect and the terrible famine that would ravage the land. Joseph's life teaches us that God brings good from evil for those who trust him. You can trust God because, as Joseph learned, he can overrule people's evil intentions to bring about his intended result. Romans 8:28 says, “God works all things out for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose.” That principle is found in God's Word from cover to cover. How does that encourage you?

**March 5 – Exodus 1:1-22:** “So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous.” (v.20) We see God's heart for innocent children. He blessed the midwives because their desire was the same as his. I think of a law that we have in our nation that allows us to take the lives of innocent children before they are born. This was never God's intent. Even with godless Egyptians, the midwives were blessed for protecting innocent children. May he have his way in our day. This is the beginning of an amazing story of deliverance that would be a foreshadow of God's heart to deliver his people from bondage and sin. What stands out to you in this first chapter? Why?

**Prayers: Pray for the beginning of two new ministries as we disciple children on Wednesday nights, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as men meeting monthly on a Saturday morning to apply God's Word to their lives from the Book of Proverbs.**